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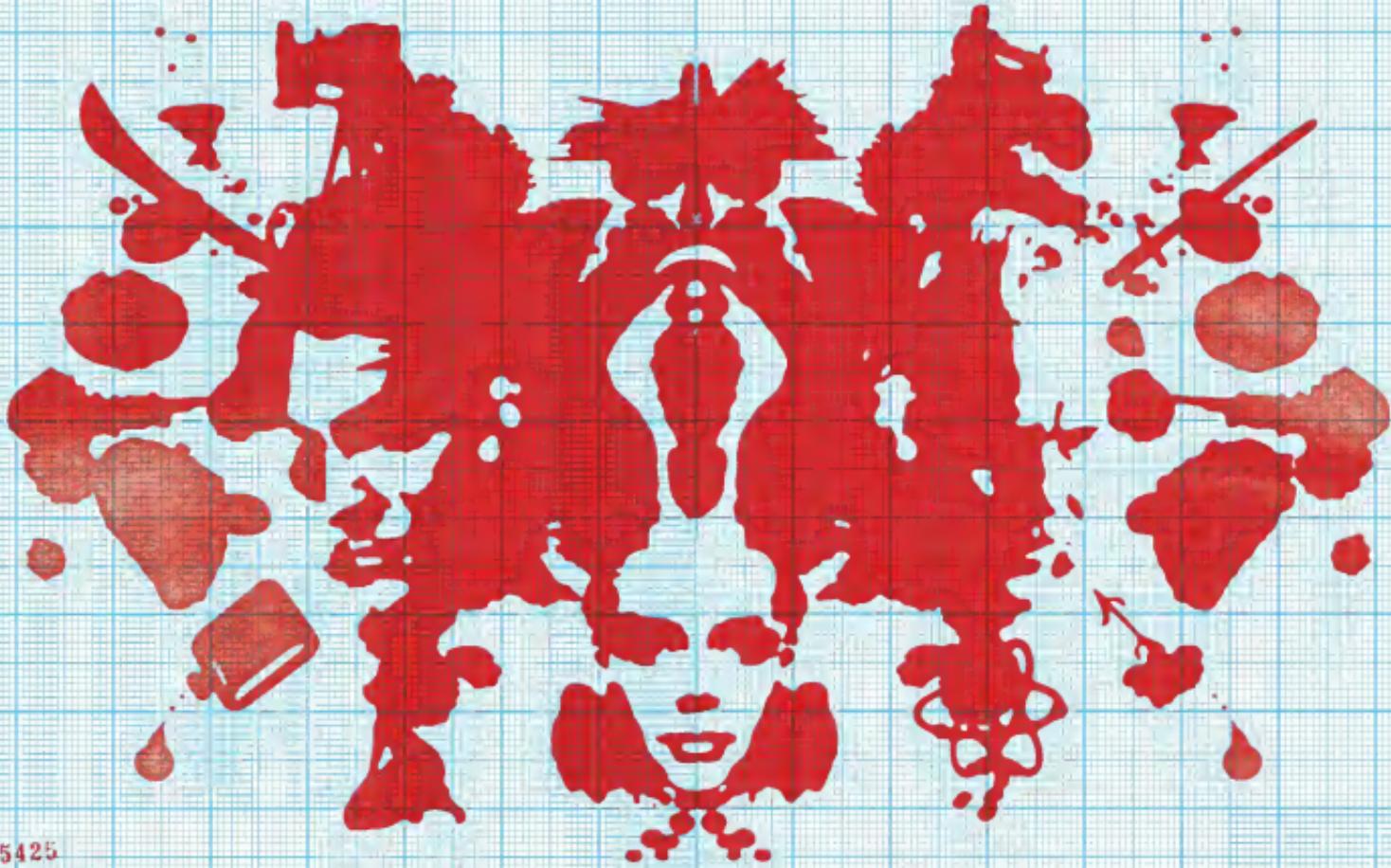
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Little White Lies

Truth & movies

The
Master

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JULY '84

THIS IS SOMETHING YOU DO FOR A BILLION YEARS

OR NOT AT ALL.





The Master

*Directed by PAUL THOMAS ANDERSON
Starring PHILIP SEYMOUR HOFFMAN, JUKEE LIU-PEDROSA, AMY ADAMS
Released NOVEMBER 2*

LEADER

Paul Thomas Anderson's spiritual post-war love story will restore your faith in cinema.

A swirl of ocean water. The cold touch of Navy steel. A thousand-yard stare set beneath the bullet-draped contours of a Beader helmet. Within the opening frames of *The Master*, the ticker-tape euphoria of the Allied victory is offset by the painful truth that for some men the Second World War didn't truly end. Of the countless young soldiers that were struck down by some form of psychological trauma only the most acute cases were successfully treated by experimental therapies such as hypnosis and narcotherapy. For others, the horrors of war remained ineluctable flesh.

Waiting out the last days of the war as the charcoaled husks of an unidentified island in the South Pacific, Freddie Quell (Joaquin Phoenix) first appears more beast than man. Shirtless and dishevelled like some battle-wary Robinson Crusoe we watch him lurch away at coconuts with a blunt machete and wrestle his Navy buddies on the shore. He is a harrowing picture of posttraumatic stress disorder; his sunken eyes

bloodshot from an addiction to crude liquor packed up during his tour; deep pools of anguish lay wary frame twisted and stiff from years of front-line action. He is both literally and metaphorically at sea. A tragic addition to writer/director Paul Thomas Anderson's crowded roster of lost souls.

Burk on home soil, Freddie is told by his superiors that the responsibilities of peacetime rest on his shoulders. He can become a choicer farmer, grocery clerk or department store photographer return to education or start a family. It doesn't really matter. The Golden Age of American Capitalism is dawning and happiness is assured to those who are willing to reach out and grab it. But Freddie is precariously out of step with the newly galvanized civilian population, his psychological adjustment fraught with antroxic outbursts and trigeminal neural tics. He prods the shadows of society looking for a quick fix (and a quick fuck) wherever he can get it. He is savage and inimitable. ←

ALETHIA

One muggy evening Freddie boards a private yacht, the Aletha, lured by bright lights and the sounds of revelry spilling from the deck. The next morning he is summoned to the captain's chambers like a runaway. It's here that a cloudy headed Freddie (Glenne with the audience) is formally introduced to Lancaster Dodd (Philip Seymour Hoffman), a robust, well-groomed man dressed in a regulation t-shirt and bathed in a soft, crackling light.

Appropriately struck within an otherworldly sense of déjà vu, Dodd embraces Freddie with canorous affection, alighting at a prior meeting between them – not long the night before (which we know was their first meeting even though, crucially, we never see it) but some other unlabeled point in time. Perhaps a past life? Dodd asserts that he is a writer, doctor, nuclear physicist and theoretical philosopher and that he and Freddie are both ‘helplessly transfixive’ men, an assessment that greatly amuses his guest.

In philosophy, *transfix* refers to the understanding of truth, something that is evident or fully disclosed. In christening Dodd's vessel accordingly, Anderson subliminally evokes the underlying principle of The Cause: a mysterious religious science group founded by Dodd as his own abstract ideology. Tenuously, there is no evidence pertaining to Dodd's self-predecessor list of accomplishments, and yet Philip Seymour Hoffman's performance is so commanding that we immediately expect Dodd to be his for (at least what he claims to be), although later viewing will come to view him as a compelling public speaker, a self-styled philanthropist, a conman and a charlatan, for now drug in the bowls of the Aletha, he appears unswervingly sincere, someone to be trusted. Like Freddie, we quickly fall under his spell.

BREAKING POINT

At the film's stand-out scene, which brings to mind the opening dinner-table exchange between Philip Baker Hall and John C. Reilly in Anderson's 1996 debut *Mild Eagle*, Freddie agrees to participate in a one-on-one ‘counseling cum-conditioning exercise’ since Dodd has ‘coaxed’ processing. With a tape recorder rolling, Dodd tells Freddie to respond without hesitating or blushing, and proceeds to rattle off a sequence of probing and repetitive questions: are you thoughtful in your remarks? Do your past failures bother you? Have you ever had sexual contact with a member of your family?

What begins as an informal profiling session – filmed as a breathless single-shot close-up – gradually escalates into something more sinister. Dodd's fascination with Freddie seeps into raw obsession as he methodically peels back the layers of his subject's psyche. And revelations of a recurring dream about his mother and a deep seeded resentment towards his estranged father (it becomes apparent that while his malaise was compounded by his time at war, Freddie's condition could well be rooted in an earlier trauma). In this moment a present question arises: is it possible to break what is already broken?

BACK BEYOND

Dodd is told that he has wandered from the proper path and is asked to look ‘back beyond’ to return to the pre-birth era. Dodd knows that before him sits not just a worthy benefactor of The Cause but a right-hand man in waiting, someone who might substitute his bold theories. But Freddie is more interested in his own self-exploring hijinks than Dodd's peculiar self-help tools. The big idea of The Cause is that salvation comes from returning man to his state of state of perfection, a hypothesis that promises salvation and happiness in equal measure. As one autopilot cyborg sagaciously observes during one of Dodd's healing sessions: no one based on the will of one man is the basis of evil.

This is the only time you'll hear the ‘t’ word in *The Master*. Anderson isn't interested in drawing parallels between The Cause and any real-life quasi-religious group. Rather he uses the concept of cult as a springboard into a broader evaluation of passion versus moderation, good versus evil, and truth versus fiction. Once this dense thematic framework he weaves numerous motifs from his previous five features – the dysfunctional family, the nurturing father, the sexually domineering male –

Dodd's over-active libido (for instance, he exposed somewhat surreally during a dinner party scene in which he mentally demands every female guest, as well as during a dinner date at the Naval briefing home and in flashbacks to that champagne beach where Freddie aggressively dry knaps (in the most literal sense) a voluptuous figure and picks up sand). Anderson has spoken of a fixation with pornography that developed in his early teens; a vice that would manifest itself in his 1988 debut short, *The Devil Digger Story*, and *Boogie Nights*, the 1997 feature (it inspired like Dodd, Anderson neither victimizes nor condemns Freddie, but instead views him as a kind of animal-sorceress who can only hope to vanquish his demons once his primitive impulses have been suppressed).

FAMILY

To Dodd, Freddie is part pet project, part-pedigree son – a debased undergraduate who is prepared to sacrifice himself for The Cause even though we suspect he doesn't really understand why. He serves Dodd with unfreshening loyalty, clutching with pride at the bone of a honcho-like when Dodd is arrested for a heist/murder, with no regard for his personal safety.

This recklessness makes Dodd's family – dour matron Peggy (a sparingly used but sensational Amy Adams) and biological kids Val (Glenne Headly) and Elizabeth (Amber Coffman) – increasingly wary of The Cause's duplicitous new recruit. Freddie feeds and facilitates Dodd's monomania, inspiring something in him that no one, not even his wife, can explain. Understandably Peggy feels threatened by Freddie, but she tolerates his volatility, persistently because she loves her husband too much to jeopardize his newfound creative momentum.

If all this identifies *The Master* as an eccentric character study, in truth it's much more than that: it's a stark and at times unsettling portrait of an



LEAD REVIEW



the human condition as seen through the eyes of two enigmatic individuals both staying to their own beat at a time when social conservatism was becoming increasingly prevalent. America in the 1960s may have been a land of prosperity and opportunity, but that was also a decade in which the fear of communism and the potential threat of nuclear conflict weighed heavy on the public consciousness.

The palpated mood is reflected in both Jonny Greenwood's fervid jazz-influenced score and Milos Malamava Jr.'s dreamily narrated 70mm palette. Filmed in loco Anderson's regular DP Robert Elmer (who was busy filming *The Journey Legacy* at the time of production), Malamava Jr. - who recently lensed Francis Ford Coppola's macabre horror fever dreams *Tetro* and *Twixt* - manages to accentuate every meticulous period detail without ever extracting from the metaphorical nuances in Anderson's script.

Like Daniel Plainview before him, Dodd is a principled hardy man, but above all he is a man of calculated calculation, someone self-assured and arrogant enough to stand behind his ideas however unusual and implausible they might be. America was built by men like Dodd, by the dissenters and pioneers whose fears inspired the nation's migration and transformed a young nation ravaged by Civil War into an economic and technological superpower. Of course, *The Master* is a vision of Dodd's own financial and business trials and not an altruistic investment in his countrymen or species at large. Whatever has matters, however, it's clear that Dodd is not about to let anything or anyone stand in the way of his pursuit of greatness.

CRACKS

Fluid long takes and elaborate Steadicam tracking shots are recognized hallmarks of Anderson's work, yet in *The Master* it is the protagonists themselves that are notably reflexive. We know that both men refresh the sting of salt water in their lungs, but while Freddie drifts along in search of slender hunting, Dodd's animal, migratory patterns – he moves from San Francisco to New York City via the Panama Canal before eventually tipping back to England – is by turns the result of his disdain for the white-picket fence idealism of mid-century home and an occupational hazard of his conflict ridden comrade. While initially this shared disconnection from sex, lead strengthen Freddie and Dodd's bond, it's not long before their twin leadership come unstack.

Freddie accompanies Dodd to the desert to retrieve a buried trunk containing Dodd's unpublished work, which is bound in print under the title *The Split Silver and Steel*. A gift to Hume sapiens? At the book's launch, Laura Dern's Inheritrix devout believer picks up on a subtle terminological inconsistency, prompting Dodd to reluctantly lose his cool. We know her just making it all up as he goes along – his philosophy deals as tritely and ad hoc as travel as a rational passage to spiritual enlightenment – but for the first time the mark ships and Freddie begins to challenge his master's veneer.

In an attempt to reaffirm Freddie's faith, Dodd takes him hark into the desert. Driving into the middle of nowhere, Dodd picks a point on the horizon and races towards it on his motorcycle, before returning to his starting position. It's a typically absurd moment, the kind of giddy theory Dodd is used to seeing Freddie lay up. Not this time. Freddie bows in and doesn't look back, leaving a crushed Dodd to sulk across the desert in muted-toned contemplation.

After going their separate ways, Freddie and Dodd re-unite in England. At *The Master*'s lavish new headquarters, Freddie had been expecting to →

be welcomed with open arms, and is visibly upset when Dodd, with Peggy at his side, appears indifferent towards him. Just as Don Reynolds' Jack Turner had lied the past and his father with been bigger in *Boogie Nights*, so Dodd has come to accept the fact he will never be able to measure Freddie; he alone would know his true image. But Dodd's aloofness carries another meaning. He has felt the pain of having his heart broken by Freddie before, and though he swears it's his adopted son to reassure his place at the head of the flock, he knows he couldn't bear to watch him ride off over the horizon again.

THE TRUTH

Freddie may be a emotionally stunted, but does that automatically make him more manipulative, or being manipulated by a charismatic character like Dodd? If the generation that the world is divided into those who lead and those who choose to be led to believe, is it also true that, as Dodd points out, "Everyone of us is living for someone else"? Are human beings simply hardened to conform? Or are we all searching for a higher truth? These are the types of questions that make *The Master* so challenging—not because there are no straight or easy answers but because Anderson leaves so much open to interpretation.

This is a film that will affect different people in different ways. It is in many respects a sad portrayal of damaged compassion, although there is a warm glow to Freddie and Dodd's brief honeymoon period, as well as a flashback to a tender scene between Freddie and his sweetheart, to whom he promises his hand only to discuss upon returning home from war that she has already accepted another man's proposal and stopped town. There are unexpected bursts of humour, too. There's even a fart gag.

Making no mistakes, this is a movie entrenched in darkness. And yet for all that, *The Master* is designed with green-screens of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*—which echoes in its use of artful prose and symbolism to explore complex themes such as clarity/duality and the existence of a supreme being—and in a former student Kubrick's *Atonement*. Wide shot, anatomical dissection and magical realism remain vital components of Anderson's storytelling palette.

The Master's lack of aquatic enthusiasm (there's an Old Testament crescendo or bloody third act coming to bowel right suggest) Anderson has said little appetite for composing gaudy metaphysical parades. In truth, however, there is simply no call for excess here. Towering performances aside, are the understated gestures that stick with you—the sit-a-guitar death lead in the form of a song and a single tear, sea cat away to a naked sand woman that emphasizes the importance of holding on to the things you love. **WILL WOODWARD**



ANTICIPATION: *Artistic Jukebox* **5**
This year, Anderson is a major cinematic event.

ENDURANCE: Confronting and interrogating
Unusually bleak work of cosmic depth that
drives on in terms of emotional resonance **5**

IN RETROSPECT:
All hail the master **5**

"BRILLIANT...POWERFULLY HUMAN
AND LIFE-AFFIRMING"



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“STUNNING”

"ENTHRALLING

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ACT

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*** WORDS BY ASHLEY CLARKE ***

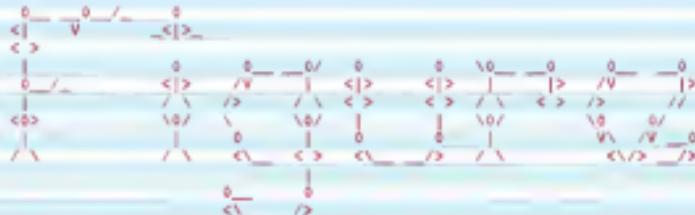
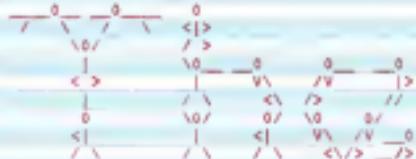
WHEN IT COMES TO UNDERSTANDING THE MOST ENIGMATIC FILMMAKER OF HIS GENERATION, THE TRUTH IS EVERYTHING.

Since emerging with his feature debut, *Hard Eight*, in 1996, LA native Paul Thomas Anderson has established himself as one of the pre-eminent American filmmakers of his generation. He may only have released six features in 16 years, but each new film has been marked by a rare combination of intelligence, humanity and technical mastery.

And mystique. Despite the high regard in which Anderson is held, little is known of his inner life or what drives him as a filmmaker. We know that he's an autodidact who dropped out of film

school after two days. We know that he once dated singer Fiona Apple, and now lives in LA with actress Maya Rudolph and their three children. But he is disdainful of the PR circus, and fiercely protective of both his work and his privacy. Down the years, Anderson has been characterized variously as a control freak, a genius and a brat who cut himself off from his childhood friends.

Choosing the defining factors, *Ladies* has built a portrait of the man and his movies that aims to penetrate this mystique. This is Paul Thomas Anderson through the looking glass. —



Ernie Anderson was no household name, but he was a well-respected figure in US entertainment circles. After working as a DJ in New York and Rhode Island, he moved to Cleveland in the late 1950s and became a TV personality. Finally, he settled in LA. His son, Paul, was born on June 26, 1970.

Twelve years later, Ernie gave Paul his first video camera, and in 1988 he provided the amusingly stammered narration for the 17-year-old's mock-doc *The Pink Juggler Story*, a hugely accomplished short that would eventually blossom into 1997's *Boogies Angels*. Ernie died from cancer soon after the first preview of *Boogies Angels*, and never got to see the finished film. Anderson Jr named his production company Ghoulards after his father's most beloved TV character: a moustachioed Imposter who popped up in the middle of horror films to criticize their ridiculous plots.

Ernie Anderson introduced his son to the entertainment landscape in LA, but the two men shared a complex dynamic. Though it's difficult

to ascertain the extent to which the recurrent variations of father/son conflicts in Anderson's work are directly inspired by his relationship with Ernie, it's nevertheless a remarkably strong through-line in his screenwriting.

Hard Eight features an older man taking a young drifter under his wing, while *Boogies Angels* sees a porn director do the same. But it's most explicit in 1999's *Magnolia*, with two storylines dedicated to strained familial relationships. It's been suggested that much of the material regarding the ailing Earl Partridge in *Magnolia* (as played by Jason Robards) was based on Anderson's experience of watching his own father die of cancer. *There Will Be Blood* (2007), meanwhile, features a ruthless oilman's shocking abandonment of his only son.

The Master also explores the issue of father-son surrogacy. This time, however, it's the younger man who harks back to Ernie. Like Anderson Sr, Joaquin Phoenix's Freddie Quell is a Navy veteran who served in the Pacific during World War II, and was born around 90 years ago.

The San Fernando Valley

In Thom Andersen's 2003 film essay, *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, the director laments the condescension of legions of filmmakers toward the city's suburbs: "They know only one part of the city, and that part's been tapped too often." That's not a charge one could readily throw at Paul Thomas Anderson.

Growing up in the San Fernando Valley — a metropolitan chunk of southern California — he spent a significant portion of his teens haunting the area with his camera, scouting (even if unconsciously) for future locations. And yet there's an insecurity about these roots. He wrote in 1999: "For many years I was ashamed, thinking that if I was not from the big city of New York or the far-flung fields of Iowa I had nothing to say."

But Anderson grew to love the LA hinterland. *Joaquin Nights* sees the director returning to memories of his youth as a sex-obsessed Valley scamp. It's an affectionate tale of losers, dreamers and shabby anti-glamour set in the pornographic heartland; a place where people go to be

someone else. By his own admission, Anderson's *Magnolia* was an attempt to make "the mother of all San Fernando Valley films", an anguished tone poem to the area as a crucible of existential anxiety.

Lower key, though more fascinating as a yardstick of Anderson's changing relationship with the area, is 2002's *Punch-Drunk Love*, a wozy, unkempt comedy-drama. Its disturbed protagonist, Barry Egan (Adam Sandler), dreams of escaping the banal, part of the city in which he lives and works. It's notable that every major factor affecting Egan and facilitating the story's progress comes from outside the spacious but oddly claustrophobic Valley: his love interest is English; his nemesis is from Utah; and his big moment of physical romantic courage occurs in Hawaii. It's as though Anderson was communicating an urge to expand his horizons beyond the limits of home. Although his subsequent work has been set in and around the state of California, it has unfolded on broader historical and thematic canvases. □

ROBERT ALTMAN

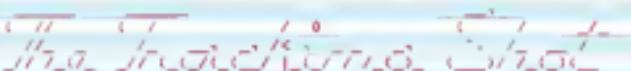
Over the years, Anderson has been favourably compared to a host of filmmakers, from Quentin Tarantino and Martin Scorsese to Orson Welles, John Huston and Stanley Kubrick. However, one influence stands above the rest, helping us understand the filmmaker Anderson has become. "There have been a hundred who have tried to be Robert Altman," he once wrote, "but they miss that certain ingredient: they aren't him."

Thematic and stylistic comparisons between the pair began to crystallise around the release of *Magnolia*, which resembled Altman's 1995 *Short Cuts* in its sprawling account of unhappy, interconnected Angelinos. Though *Boogie Nights'* shaggy-dog charm evinced more than a hint of Altman's *Heathen* (1993).

Like Altman, Anderson quickly developed a company of regular actors

who spoke in rebarbous tones about him, contributing to the sense that he is very much an actors' director. Anderson even cast Kitman stalwarts Henry Silberman and Michael Murphy in small roles in *Magnolia*. There's also a prominent link on the technical side: Anderson's editor Dylan Tichenor — largely responsible for the ebb and flow of his multi-character works — was assistant to Altman's long-time editor Geraldine Peroni on several films in the 1990s, including *The Player*.

A final connection underscores the closeness of their bond. The ailing Altman hired Anderson as a backup director on 2007's *A Prairie Home Companion*, and charged him with taking the reins in case of his incapacity. Altman died shortly after the film's completion, but not before symbolically passing the baton to the younger director.



In *Hard Eight* Anderson unleashed a mesmerically complex tracking shot around a casino just one year after Martin Scorsese's *Casino* had set the template. *Boogie Nights* pushed the envelope even further. Though some critics denounce the tracking shot as emblematic of a director with more style than substance, the use of this technique actually reveals a filmmaker thinking carefully about how to tell a story. Consider the words of *Anderson* regular William H. Macy: "These long, sweeping shots are becoming legendary, but each one advances the plot. And when the shot is done, he comes back to the moment. It makes you feel safe."

The opening take of *Boogie Nights* is technically breathtaking, but it also performs the narrative feat of introducing us to a large cast

of characters in short order. In *Magnolia*, Anderson drew upon his childhood knowledge of television for the astonishing tracking shots around the game show studio, the length and complexity of which induced a triple tension in story, character and audience.

Post *Magnolia*, Anderson's use of tracking shots has become sparser. The camera's slow-motion mobility in *There Will Be Blood* — think of the devastatingly creepy track around the small church when preacher Eli Sunday (Paul Dano) delivers his exhortation — display a rigorous stateliness, harking back to the searching Steadicam work of Iain软ick's *The Shining*.

Anderson's use of the tracking shot as a technique may well come to define the director in retrospect: searching, complicated, visionary and mobile.

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Filmmaking is often characterised as a game of luck, but a seven-year-old Paul Thomas Anderson is said to have written in his diary, 'My name is Paul Anderson. I want to be a writer, producer, director, SFX man. I know how to do everything and I know everything. Please hire me.' Hera, one suspects, was an individual with a preternaturally firm grasp of his own destiny.

Accordingly, Anderson has injected a fascinating thematic through-line of fate, chance and predestination into his canon thus far. Like the novels of Thomas Pynchon or those LA men, *American Psycho*, Anderson will supposedly direct for his next project; little in the director's work is completely random. Instead, things happen according to some abstract cosmic order.

His breakthrough short, 1993's *Cigarettes & Coffee*, told the story of a small group of down-and-outs mysteriously connected by a \$20 bill. *Boogie Nights'* narrative hinges on a furtive discovery: how many 17-year-old dishwashers with 13" members are there? *Magnolia* — an epic of chance — opens with a prologue comprised of three tales of freakish coincidence and features a host of characters bursting into song at the same time. And what was the role of the rusty harmonium mysteriously dropped off outside Barry Egan's office in *Human-Drunk Love*? Not to act as a harbinger of discordant activity to come? There will be blood sent even further, exploring the concept of American manifest destiny and westward expansion through the fortuitous discovery of oil. ®



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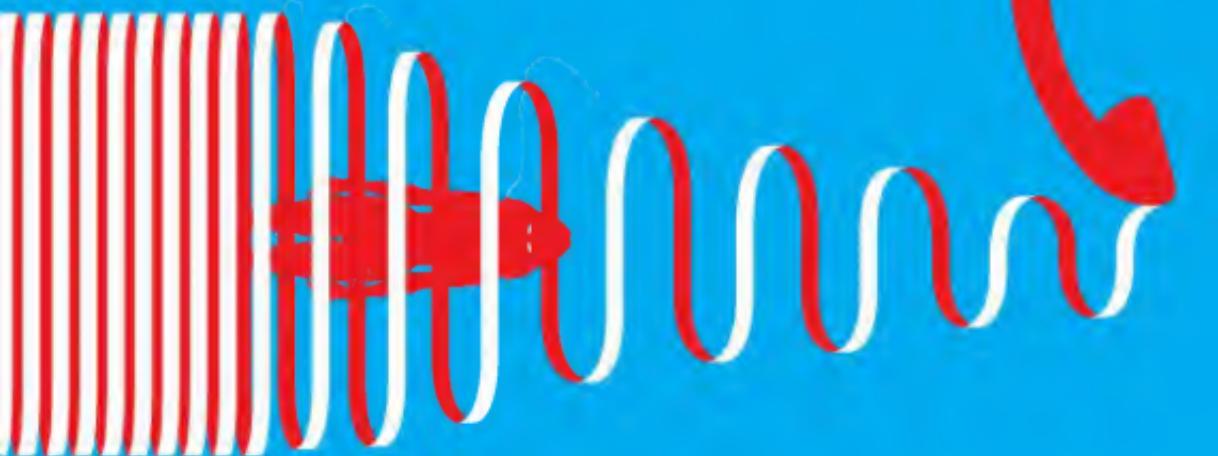


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*** INTERVIEW BY ADAM WOODWARD ***



PRODUCER JOANNE SELLAR REVEALS THE SECRETS OF PAUL THOMAS ANDERSON'S CREATIVE PROCESS, AND EXPLAINS HOW SHE FELL PUNCH-DRUNK IN LOVE WITH THE DIRECTOR'S WORK.

"I used to help run the Scala cinema for [producers] Stephen Woolley and Nik Powell in the mid-'70s. They were developing Palace Pictures at the time and decided to launch a music video division. I went off to spearhead that, and basically learned how to become a producer. I cut my teeth on *Richard Stanley's Hard Eight* in 1988.

"After that I did another film with Richard, called *Dust Devil*. It was an interesting learning experience; we were the gear-producers when Palace went bankrupt. At that point we set up Scala Productions, opened an office in LA and optioned the script to *Dark Blood*. I went over to get the film financed and cast — unfortunately, River Phoenix died 12 days from the end of production. It was tragic, but one positive thing that came out of my time in LA was that I got to meet Paul Thomas Anderson.



"One of the producers on *Hard Eight* was looking for a line producer, and I recommended my now-husband, Daniel Day-Lewis. He put on pretty well with Paul and introduced us. We instantly hit it off. I remember some time later he gave me the script for *Rough Nights*, and just being totally blown away, I knew I had to work with him. You could tell right away he was someone on the up somebody who really, really knew what he wanted and who had exciting vision.

"He was very hyper, very energetic. He was young and cocksure, really just an arrogant kid who wanted to make films. But he always had this air of someone who was very focused and clear about what he wanted to achieve and how he was going to do it. He was extremely stubborn, which can be hard from a producing point of view, but of course you have to respect that stubbornness because it's his uncompromising attitude that makes like such a great filmmaker. It took a while for him to trust me, but that's how it is with Paul. He's not someone who automatically trusts people you really have to earn his respect. But once you do gain his trust he's completely loyal.

"Paul will start writing scenes for a new project and go through it with me, talk to me about how it looks in his head, we have long conversations. I'll read the scenes and once he's got a complete script I'm the first person to read it —

I'll suggest changes and make notes, until Erik's more until he's ready to go away and refine it. We've worked together on every film since *Boogey Nights*, so we have a shorthand now which allows me to get on with my job and respect his style. The thing with Paul is, when you're working on one of his films, you're really working on it. It's a long-term thing and you have to be fully committed.

"Having children in 2001 totally changed my professional outlook. I made a shelter just to do Paul's films because I couldn't manage doing other people's films while trying to raise a family. I never really wanted to take the studio route. I've had opportunities along the way, but I've never been interested in that side of the industry. If I work on something I have to feel really passionate about it. I need to believe in the person who's making it. Otherwise it's just a job and that doesn't interest me."



"After we've put a project to bed there's usually a period of downtime, but in the case of the *Masters*, Paul is already talking about the next one. That's really unusual because typically he likes to flesh one thing before he starts thinking about what he might like to do next. He'll often have kernels of ideas in different stages that he's working on, but usually you'll see those ideas re-emerge two or three years later. But he's already chosen to make an adaptation of *Inherent Vice* for his next film. He's a huge Thomas Pynchon fan and he became interested in the book when it got published. There was a point when *The Master* got delayed when it looked like he might make that first. He was obsessed with getting *The Master* out though, so as soon as we got the money together there was no going back.

"Hagan Ellison was our saviour on *The Master*. Universal convinced Paul to write a project straight after *There Will Be Blood*. It took him quite a while, which isn't uncommon, but it was during that time that Hollywood really started to change quite profoundly. 'Trans' became a dirty word to the major studios, they became interested in just doing popcorn movies and no one wanted to touch anything that was dressed high-art.

"PAUL'S BECOME A MORE ORGANIC FILMMAKER OVER THE YEARS; HE'S MUCH FREER AND MORE OPEN. A LOT OF THAT IS DOWN TO CONFIDENCE."

"Universal backed away from the project so we took it to the marketplace, which itself was changing because all the mid-majors – Paramount, 20th Century Fox, RKO, MGM, etc – had shut up shop, and the surviving indie labels like Fox Searchlight and Focus had pretty much cut their budgets back to nothing. Regen had just set up a start-up film financing company and was looking to finance great movies made by real auteurs. We met with her and she was a huge fan of Paul's and was willing to take a risk on us. She was the only one who had any balls in that town.

"Paul's become a more organic filmmaker over the years; he's much freer and more open now, and a lot of that is down to his own confidence, which seems to grow with every film. *Boogey Nights* and *Hugo* were very well thought-out. In that in pre-production he'd have shot lists written out for every day of production, which is pretty unheard of. On *Punch-Drunk Love* he became a lot more fluid in terms of how he approached the production. He's less guarded now, he's able to listen to other people's opinions and still follow his gut instinct. Nowadays Paul seeks out the input of guys like [cost director] Jack Palk, [DP] Robert Daufl and [costume designer] Mark Bridges in the very early stages of production.

"We're a big family, but it's a very serious, earnest endeavour to make a film with Paul. Everyone takes their role very seriously, and Paul expects a certain level of professionalism from everyone he works with. He's mellowed out a lot, but he's still very much a control freak. He still wants to do everything in a way, but he's got a family of his own now and he's definitely become more relaxed with age. But he's still that sameocksure old Inside. He will never ever compromise on anything." ®

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Photography: Jonathan Black

carhartt.
WORK IN PROGRESS



The Illusion Hoffman's Choice

*** INTERVIEW BY ASAH WOODWARD ***
*** ILLUSTRATION BY ABRAHAM CRAFT ***

PHILIP SEYMOUR HOFFMAN DOES WHAT HE HAS TO DO.

Philip Seymour Hoffman has made a career out of playing sad sacks, oddballs and temperament assholes. The kind of self-loathing, self-punishing creeps you wouldn't want to get stuck in a lift with. But whether he's getting his method on to portray an American literary icon, running down Hunt's day or just breathing heavily down the phone, Hoffman is invariably a compelling screen presence: nowhere more so than in the films of his long-time friend Paul Thomas Anderson.

Hoffman has appeared in all but one of Anderson's six features stretching back to 1996's *Hard Eight*, establishing himself as a versatile character actor in the process. In the decade since their last collaboration, 2007's *Punch-Drunk Love*, Hoffman has reaffirmed his passion for the theatre, earning a

Tony nomination for his lead turn in the Broadway revival of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. He's also directed his first feature, *Jack Does*, shooting and recently announced his second, *Ziekkel Moze*, which appeared on the 2011 industry "Black List" of acclaimed unproduced scripts.



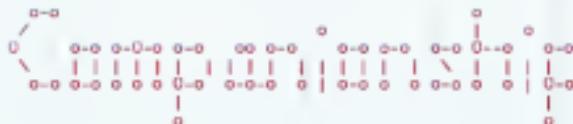
Despite this late-career shift, Hoffman isn't about to turn his back on life in front of the lens just yet — he's due to start filming *A Most Wanted Man*, Anton Corbijn's follow-up to *The American*, and the *Hunger Games* sequel, within the next few months. Moreo, all that, L'Wren Scott met up with Hoffman to get the lowdown on his special relationship with Anderson and his astonishing performance in *The Master*. ■



"Paul and I started talking about this character four years ago. But it's weird; I didn't really have a backstory for Lancaster in mind. I know I thought about it a lot but I don't think I tried to nail it down too much. I think the less you know about him, the more interesting a character he is. He's just a guy who's basically dabbled in lots of things; he got a few degrees and probably did some service in some kind of military capacity. And then I think he became interested in treating people and dealing with people and helping people. He's coming from a good place, I think. That's his history — he's a guy who's done a lot of different things. How much of all of these things he

says he is are true, I don't know. It's hard to nail him down and in that sense it was difficult to play him. He's a mysterious guy."

"In terms of how I dealt with him technically there were a lot of different points of inspiration outside of the obvious stuff. But who he is and the way he is, the internal life of the guy, is something I had to think a lot about by myself. It's not that I wanted to avoid reference points; it's just the way I tend to do things. It's so hard to put into words because it's something that takes place over a long period of time. It's a gradual process; a lot of discussion and reading and research goes into it."



"It's been 10 years since Paul and I made a movie together. It's good — now we don't have to do it again for another 10 years. No, I mean, this was a great one to be in. But my working relationship with Paul doesn't matter; it's my friendship with him that does. I get concerned when we don't talk for a few months, not when we don't make a movie together for a few years. I make sure that we stay close as friends and that's what we concern ourselves with. In his misreadings of trying to put stories and scripts together — because he writes all the time — if he comes upon something that he decides suits me then we'll talk about it, but otherwise I'm not constantly looking to work with him. I've already worked with him enough for a lifetime, in a lot of ways. But I

hope we keep working together, I hope I'm still a part of his stories. But if not then that's okay."

"It's funny because I have this whole other life in the theatre that he's not a part of at all. It's such a huge part of my life and I think that's always been very healthy for our relationship because I bring a lot of what I do in the theatre into Paul's world. I think Paul's more open to a lot of things now; people's input and opinions. He's more open to feedback and criticism. You've got to trust yourself and have confidence in what you're doing, and Paul has a lot of that so it's tough for him to let others in and listen to different ideas. But he's getting really good about allowing mistakes to happen. It's a more organic process now."



"I became a director in the theatre many years ago and that's been my role for a while now, so when I crossed over into directing a movie I did think about Paul but also a lot of other directors I've worked with. The biggest thing Paul taught me was that whatever you do has to be yours, whether it's on stage or on a movie set. It's got to be personal; it's got to mean something. I'm on my own journey now and I hope I can make a handful of movies in my life. I am trying to find my own voice as a director and there's no doubt that Paul will

continue to be a guiding influence in that respect."

"You always go back to acting and you kind of forget anything that's a creative thing like that. It's easy to forget how you did it. It's hard to replicate how you made something work before. When something comes to you you go with it and from there you might go off in any number of directions, but you always forget how that actually happens. I guess it always starts with a question though as stupid as they sound, you have to find a way into the conversation."



"I'm a very curious guy, but I also want to shut down sometimes. In the storytelling business you're constantly being insinuated and digging at yourself. Sometimes you've just got to leave it alone. But Lancaster is definitely someone I found hard to switch off from. I just find it so moving that all he wants us to be close to this guy. It fascinates me that the need you can have for another individual can be so strong. And I think there's something really attractive about being as free as Freddie is; certainly that's a quality Lancaster envies."

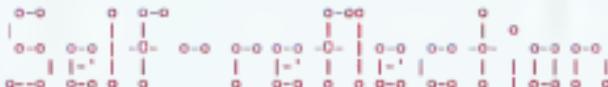
"Making this film reinforced my belief that all religions and social movements are susceptible to

these types of figures. For Me, I wasn't interested in just looking at Scientology because there are so many other movements that have come out of charismatic men. But I stay away from the easy, cynical 'It's a cult move' line because I don't think that gets anybody anywhere. There's nothing 'catty' about it; you know, it's not like we're sat around drinking Kool-Aid. It's a psychological, emotional thing. I like the idea of seeing if it's possible to be manipulated or led down a certain path regardless of who you are or what your beliefs are. I've always been a little bit wary of who's leading me, what group I'm involved with, you know. It's good to never blindly follow, to keep asking questions."



"Every time I make I always try to read reviews in the beginning, just to take a temperature of it. I've learned that it's almost irresponsible not to because you can end up having a situation where everyone around you is really scared to tell you the truth, and that's not fair to make people be like that out of your own ignorance. I want to know enough that I can look anyone in the eye and know what people are saying. But then I let it go

because after a point it is what it is and things just take their course. I've been there when the reviews are really harsh and negative and obviously it's not nice, but you can't let it affect you. You have to learn to take it on the chin and just let it be. Every once in a while you do something that gets torn apart and you'll read stuff and think, 'f---, you know what, I see your point'. Mostly it's about knowing enough to be able to let it go."



"What else could I want? I've grown and shaken up to the best of my ability and career-wise I think I've had it as good as I could ever have dreamed. I hope I don't start gaining regret because I feel really good right now. I've dealt with all the bad stuff and learned to take it with the good. Life-wise that's a different question, but career-wise I've been very lucky. I want to do a lot of different things. Right now I want to keep directing theatre, I have

plans to do that next year. Maybe direct a film, too, hopefully I'll direct many more films and maybe produce some as well. I'm lucky in that sense because even though I'm a terrible writer I have good relationships with a few really amazing writers. My brother's a writer in the family and most of my closest friends are writers so I kind of vicariously do that through them. I love talking things through with people." (©)

Going Long Live Film



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID JENKINS FOR

TRADITIONAL FILM STOCK IS UNDER THREAT FROM THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION
—SWEEPING CINEMAS, SO WHY HAS PAUL THOMAS ANDERSON FILMED THE MASTER IN 35MM — THE MOST EXPENSIVE AND IMPRACTICAL FORMAT OF THEM ALL?

FOR A FILMMAKER THAT'S WHY I'LL NEVER MAKE A MOVIE ON VIDEOSTATE.
—JAKE GYLLENHAAL

Pack the popcorn, bring the buttered rolls and sit back, because it's time to talk about celluloid and its aftermath. What makes that so tough to acquire is tough to grasp and tough to discern. Many have questioned the director's motives, but the "in" insight we need look no further than his own words. Take, for example, the scene from *Rango* (2011) in which Philip Baker Hall's porno financier Roxy contact invites art-house director Jack Horner (Burt Reynolds) that he gets via the satellite industry-shuttle and starts shooting his hedge flicks on a new, cheaper format: video. Horner, retaining a very similar song with his artistic integrity, replies that, "It looks like art and it sounds like shit, then it's art."

A little technical background: photographic film stock – the tangible 35mm reel that you hold in your hand and develop via a chemical process – is currently being replaced in the film industry's staple format, the new-old-on-the-block 2K DCP, or "digitized cinema package," essentially a heavy-duty flash drive containing a high-quality digital copy of a film. With super-sized 70mm film, 45mm of its character is used to retain the image, while the remaining four is used for holding its magnetic media tracks; the difference between 2K and 35mm film is like the difference between a Kindle and a paperback book. The difference between 35mm and 70mm is the same as a paperback book and a leather-bound classic that's been foiled in gold leaf. Set out in terms Jack Horner would appreciate: Does it fit in your jacket like shit and it certainly doesn't sound like shit.

Andy Jones, manager of the Cambridge Picturehouse, one of the few venues in the US still in possession of 70mm projection facilities, echoes Horner's sentiments: "For my money, if 16 is the best format to shoot on, but the business model just doesn't work. And it's not just the image. The sound on 70mm film is, I think, still superior to the Dolby dolby system used by most cinemas that have undergone digital upgrades."

In the early days, 70mm was the preserve of prestige epics and lavish musicals. Fried

Steinman's take on *Samuel Fuller's Hell Is for Heroes* in 1953, Fred Ward as a POW in *The Big Red One*, a post-war epic of one of America's greatest and jolliest capers, *How Green Was My Valley*, both in 1959. This was the age of cinematic grandeur, when prints were hired by over-sized picture houses with 40-foot screens where the colossal, immersive nature of the image could be experienced in all its giddy splendour.

Yet the medium was also embroiled in its opposite: of field and ultra-detailed resolution. Studio chain crystallized the expansive, forbidding qualities of the deserts of Jordan and Morocco in *Lawrence of Arabia* in 1962 to digital restoration to be released in the US on November 16 – Jacques Tati seized the possibilities of the expanded frame in its fullness with his 1958 masterpiece, *Holiday*, in which every scene has multiple points of focus, and Stanley Kubrick attained an all-enveloping grandeur even for 1968's 2001: A Space Odyssey, but with each print costing around £25,000 to produce and with each reel only containing 20 minutes of film, the logistics of 70mm screenings were both complex and prohibitively expensive. As a result, it won't be unusual for a single 70mm print to tour the country in a "roadshow" presentation. Tom Jones recalls the squeeze that established book of screening Alfred Hitchcock's 1955 double-astronaut epic *The Right Stuff* in 70mm, squeezed into a projectionist's booth with 10-hulking reels of film. "The seats are phenomenal," he says. Ron Fricke's recent global tour the *Sunrise* via film in 70mm, but is only screening digitally in the US. "The producer doesn't even think of having 70mm prints of the film made," Fricke admits. "One edition is in the projection booth and kinetics," twenty-five grand up in angles.

Joshua Logan is head projectionist and repertory programmer for Chicago's Music Box Theatre, one of the US venues that played host to a pre-release screening of the Berlin 70mm. In the four years that Logan has been on the job, the only film the 16

Super-size me

THREE OTHER LARGE-SCALE FILM FORMATS THAT NEVER QUITE CAUGHT ON.

CINERAMA

Tony Jones describes Cinerama as a "great format [with] terrible films". Now seen as taking things just a tad too far, the Cinerama process developed by Disney promised such a large image that it required three perfectly set and calibrated projectors just to screen the films. Star-spangled western epic *How the West Was Won* remains the definitive example of Cinerama, even though the film's four directors were unable to shoot such basic coverage as close-ups of stars including John Wayne and Gregory Peck.

CIRCARAMA

Also known as Circle-Vision 360°, Circarama was another gimmicky format developed by Disney for use in its theme parks. Utilising nine cameras to capture a full, 360-degree panorama, it was first used for patriotic documentary short *America the Beautiful* in 1955.

SHOWSCAN

Developed by Douglas Trumbull, the mad SFX genius behind *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and director of hippy-dippy cosmic jaunt *Silent Running*, Showscan was a 65mm format that ran at 60 frames per second, resulting in a richer and more detailed image than 35mm film shot at the traditional 24fps. Trumbull created his 1983 film *Battlestar Galactica* in Showscan, but it really took off as the stock-of-choice for theme park simulator rides. However, Showscan proved prophetic, as both James Cameron and Peter Jackson have recently talked about the aesthetic advantages of shooting films at a higher frame rate, with Jackson's forthcoming *Hobbit* trilogy shot at 48fps.

music box has increased in 70mm prior to that was a restored print of Robert Wise's wistful story. "Every time we do a screening on a 70mm screen, a good deal of re-training for the projection staff is necessary to ensure no print damage occurs," says Lagan.

"Additionally, though our film projectors normally can run both 35mm and 70mm with just the replacement of a few key parts, we've found that there are always a few hours of calibrations needed every time we switch from one format to the other, particularly with regards to whether [the fact that I've not had] the handling or threading of 70mm film prints to be particularly difficult; the sheer physicality of the print in one's hands instantly leads to a more measured, determined handling than one typically affords a 35mm print."

When it comes to screening films from prints, the question is whether stated 4K projection can ever match 70mm film. "4K can almost match 35mm in terms of resolution," says Lagan, "though it's struggling with image-quality and contrast." His digital team will be able to punch 70mm "35mm looks, then bigger on large, it's substantially brighter and can present an incredibly wide range with an amazeballs level of distortion," Lagan continues. "So where you've made 3D's job of catching up with 4K harder, you've moved the goalposts."



Though 70mm has long been a little format (there wasn't a single film shot in 70mm during the whole of the 1980s), there are people and organisations that want to celebrate and preserve the medium. Since 1995, Thomas Hauerlein has been editor of *The 70mm Newsletter*, a newsletter "in circular use to disseminate technical, innovative and interesting data for 70mm films. He is now ambassador of 70mm, too. "Our aim is simple: to encourage filmmakers to produce and make new films in 70mm, then present them in 70mm with state-of-the-art digital sound on big-curved screens," says Hauerlein.

He continues: "European studios are still producing 70mm films, so it's still possible to find one. Thanks to a few cinema owners and enthusiasts – and, of course, the audience – interest for 70mm is kept alive. This was the impetus behind starting the 70mm Festival in 1996, which is a festival that only shows off 70mm films."

The contributors to the site also methodically document every film screening in 70mm across the entire globe. Whether UK audiences will be seeing any screenings of The Revenant-palmed there remains highly doubtful. ■

"ONE OF THE ALL-TIME GREAT COP FILMS"

point to point, point to point

"JAKE GYLLENHAAL AND MICHAEL PEÑA ARE OUTSTANDING"

第十一章



"POWERFUL AND COMPELLING"



**"YOU WON'T LEAVE
THE EDGE OF
YOUR SEAT"**



ANSWER



JAKE GYLLENHAAL

MICHAEL PEÑA

END OF WATCH

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IN CINEMAS NOVEMBER 23

Utopian Visions of Death

IMAGES COURTESY OF MARK RYDEN STUDIO AND PAUL KASHIN GALLERY

POP SURREALIST MARK RYDEN HAS BEEN CREATING DISTURBINGLY BEAUTIFUL OIL PAINTINGS FOR ALMOST THREE DECADES. PERVERSIALLY THE DEEPEST, DARKEST RECESSES OF THE SOUL, HIS ALCHEMICAL ART JUXTAPOSES FAIRY TALE IMAGERY WITH MACABRE MOTIFS AND CULT ICONOGRAPHY.

PINK LINCOLN, 2010



Oil on canvas, 55 x 34 x 3 inches

The Piano Player - 2012



©11; oil on canvas, 29 x 39 x 3 inches

THE SINGER 1910



Oil on canvas, 56 x 32 x 3 1/2 inches



The Meat Shop © 2011

Oil on canvas, 33 x 21 x 3 inches

© 2009 • Limited Edition



OIL ON CANVAS - 20 x 25 x 3 inches

Come With The Programme

*** WORDS BY ANDREW DRAKE ***
*** ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTOPHER JAY ***

LIFE-SAVING INTERVENTION OR 'SPIRITUAL GANG RAPE'?
LAWLESS MEETS THE EX-CULT MEMBERS Battling FOR THE
HEARTS AND MINDS OF THEIR FORMER COLLEAGUES.

No one knowingly joins a cult. But they will sign up for a charity group, a self-improvement course or a new type of exercise class, says Ian Haworth, the founder of the London-based Cult Intervention Centre. "I can't think of a single case that didn't start off innocently," he says, looking back over 13 years of experience.

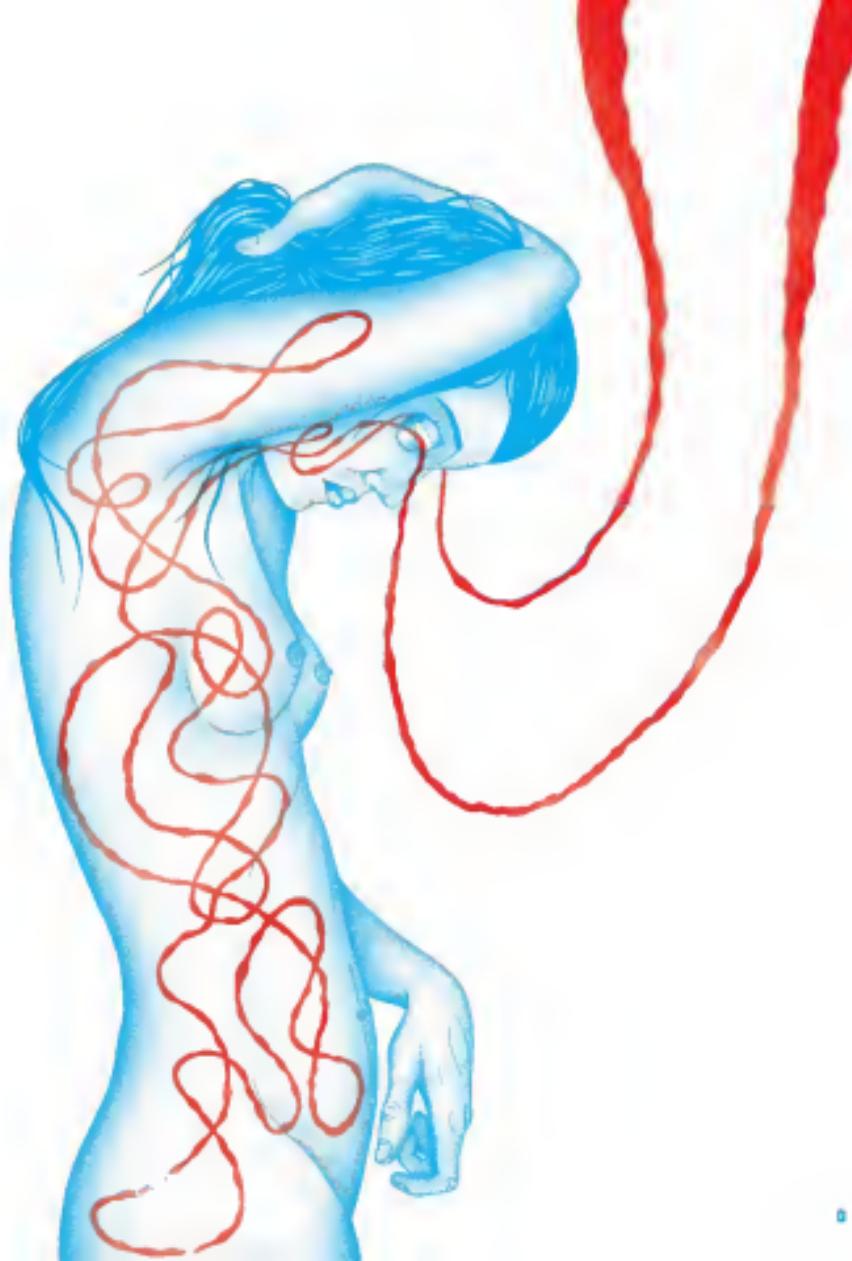
Haworth learned about the bait and switch the hard way. Before he began advising people on cults, he was part of one. He was 31, living alone in Toronto, far from his home in Lancashire, when a beautiful blonde with a clipboard stopped him at an intersection with a Harvey. She hung on his every word, told him she was part of a celebrity group that he should join, she invited him to an introductory evening and asked for his phone number.

The meeting took place at a luxury hotel, where the blonde greeted him with a hug. Haworth took a seat and soon another woman who said she had a PhD addressed the group

of about 100. She claimed she used to be an alcoholic until a drug addict had turned her the around with help from the evening's hosts: Pia Mind Development Institute. Haworth decided to leave, but to be polite he waited until the break.

As he lit a cigarette in the foyer, an organiser appeared at his side. Haworth told her he was trying to kick the habit; she offered to help with a 200-hour, four-day, guaranteed-no-money-back quit-smoking course.

Two weeks later, Haworth was sitting in an airport metal learning to quit smoking through meditation. The course was exhausting. Sessions lasted five to six hours. Little food was provided and breaks were short, precise lengths like three-and-a-quarter minutes. According to court records, police later concluded that hypnosis was used "illegally" to gain the confidence and trust of participants, and "to obtain funds for the Mind Development Institute". *





Friday through the third day, Ravorth remembers he no longer wanted a cigarette. "I hadn't quit, I just became someone else who didn't smoke," he explains. Now he only smoked more courses, as signed up the all, he could, emptying his bank account, on Monday morning he quit his job to work full-time for the group.

"Imagine you were in a play and you were given a role. You were told what your name was, what your background was, everything about the character. Then you hit your head and all you remembered was the role. That became the reality," says Steve Hansen, a former member of the Unification Church better-known as the "Moonies", of his change in personality that same experience.

"It's not quite that extreme because when you're in a cult, at three years old personally, your own identity, peaks through and you say 'I love my family'. But your cult identity says, 'that's terrible — evil spirits are trying to possess you', and it erases your real identity."

Hansen was a 17-year-old college junior who had just broken up with his girlfriend when he was "love bombed" — a frantic tactic of showering affection on potential recruits — by three women who were parking as students. They persuaded him over dinner to attend a weekend Moonie retreat. The group's founder, Sun Myung Moon, who died in September at the age of 92, proclaimed himself the Messiah, offered more weddings and was accused of brainwashing young followers — a charge he denied.

Cults control people through "instrumental change," says Hansen, who has written three books about his experience. "It's a whole combination of things. They control behaviour, information, thoughts and emotions to create a new self identity that is obedient and dependent on the leader."

Behaviour might be controlled by restricting whom members associate with or making them financially dependent on the group, Hansen says. Information might be

withheld or given only to high-level members. Looking at information that criticises the group might be a punishable offence.

Thoughts can be controlled by creating an "us and them" mentality; teaching thought-stopping techniques to allow only "good" thoughts, and prohibiting any critical questions about the leader, doctrine or policy. Emotions might be controlled through ritual confessions, making members feel guilty for not meeting targets, or羞恥ing people who leave – stimulating them to stay, until disciplined or brainwashed by their family.

It's not uncommon for members to end up with phobias about the terrible things that will happen to them if they leave. Hassen remembers Room bursting hundreds of followers to a New York City church for a screening of *The Damned*. "He gave us a lecture about how bad we'd be if we left as a prophecy of what would happen to people who left the Unification Church," Hassen recalls with a laugh.



Hassen had been to the group for two-and-a-half years and was being groomed for a leadership role when he nodded off at the wheel of a fundraising van and crashed into a tractor-trailer. With one leg fully encased in plaster and his other in bandages, he went to stay with his sister. Against his wishes, she called their parents, who arranged with e-Roomans for an intervention.

There was a moment in the backseat of a car when Hassen saw a chance to escape by reaching over to the driver's seat and snapping his father's neck. But before he could act, his father broke down. "He started to cry and he said, 'Steve, what would you do if it was your only son? What would you do if he met a controversial group and within a few weeks dropped out of college, quit his job and donated his bank account? How would you feel?'"

His father urged him to listen to the former members, promising that if he still wanted to rejoin the group, he would drive him back himself. At that point, Hassen thought his father was the one who was brainwashed, but he felt his pain.

He remembers the sessions with the ex-Meetings. "It was a very dramatic moment. I felt like I was in a dark room and someone opened the shades and the sun came streaming in. It was like someone saying, 'Steve! This is what's real, over here!'"

Hassen became a deprogrammer, visiting involuntary interventions, but quit after

a year. "I said, 'This is too traumatising'. People are programmed with phobias that they're going to be possessed by Satan, and there I am in the room trying to persuade them to rethink that root in the Meekists."

At around the same time, in 1977, American legal scholar and religious freedom advocate Alan Kayay criticised deprogrammers for practicing the same kind of physical and psychological coercion they claimed to be combating. He called for the "equal consideration to the feelings – and rights – of young people who go about in daily dread of being physically seized and subjected to protracted spiritual gang rape until they yield their most cherished religious commitments."

During the late 1980s, Ted Petrich, an American who is the "father of deprogramming", faced his first conviction for kidnapping and unlawful imprisonment:

*
"IT WAS A
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*

The Jonestown Massacre changed Hassen's mind. In November 1978, over 900 people died in Guyana on the northern coast of South America, where Jim Jones, the American leader of the Peoples Temple, led his followers – including over 200 children – to drink the cyanide-laced Kool-Aid. The mass suicide remained the single largest loss of American civilians life in a non-natural disaster until September 11, 2001.

Hassen went back to university and studied to become a counsellor with a view to helping people legally to voluntary interventions. Jonestown also inspired Hassen to set up an education and counselling centre. It was only a few weeks since his own deprogramming experience.

A neighbour who he had been trying to recruit into PSI handed him a newspaper article about a young man who had attended one of the group's courses and ended up in psychiatric care. Hassen had only been a member of the group for two-and-a-half weeks and the article jarred him. He tried calling the group's leaders to ask about it but no one took his call. So he spoke to the reporter who wrote the story instead.

The reporter invited him to the newsroom and left him alone in an office to pore over the documents that backed up the story. After 90 minutes, Hassen says, his critical faculties returned.



Although not a formal intervention, that is how voluntary deprogramming – or self-counseling – often works, says Rick Ross, who has done more than 500 interventions over 26 years for families who are concerned that a relative is being influenced by a cult.

"Basically you're hoping the person's critical thinking will kick in and they will evaluate the information with some careful consideration," says Ross. "In my experience, three out of four will end up leaving the group."

Interventions normally last four days and often take place in a family member's home, he explains. The subject can leave at any time but their family will try to persuade them to stay and listen. Ross lays out information about cults in general, before zeroing in on the particular group and how the member's decision-making may have been taken away from them.

"Many times I've sat down with people and I actually know more about the group than they do because a lot of the information has been hidden from them," he says. He arms himself with corporate filings, financial statements, and court records, plus other official documents for the exercise.

The Internet has made life difficult for groups that depend on withholding information from members or prospective recruits. Groups whose ex-members were previously afraid to speak out are becoming increasingly confident as they see others sharing their stories with dire consequences.

"The Internet has made a tremendous difference and it's still in our favour, though cults can use it for their own propaganda but there is information widely available now that is highly critical of these groups," says Hassen.

And yet new groups are emerging all the time, and it's often the smaller, more obscure organisations that are most dangerous. Hassen's advice is to check out everything.

"It is sad when you think people have all these tremendous electronic tools available and they don't use them," he says. "People spend more time buying a second-hand car than they do signing up for a course. 'What can go wrong on a course?' Well, a lot." 

ACT

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Sightseers

Directed by BEN WHEATLEY

Starring ALICE LORE, STEVE ORAM, SARAH STEWART

Released NOVEMBER 30

Ben Wheatley makes the kinds of films that feel like they've been ripped from someone else's nightmares. His first two features, *Dawn Patrol* and *EOF*, were both profoundly dark, magnetic fables that put low-rent black comedy back on the British consciousness. Without ever living up to the high standards of his previous work, *Sightseers*—Wheatley's third film—is as messy in another interesting slice of kitchen sinkery.

Alex Lowe and Steve Oram—who co-wrote the screenplay along with Wheatley's long-time collaborator and wife Amy Jump—play an eagle-eyed couple, Tom and Chris, who decide to embark on a "vacation" to the north of England to avoid creditors. This is cause for much concern for Tom's estranged mother Carol (Elisabeth Moss) a sour old soul who's straight of backbone. Tom's death wish takes to criminally blackening them since the death of the family dog, Poppo. In a tragic croaking moment:

"It's time for Tom to start putting her own happiness first. So she and Chris gather their camping gear and hit the M1 embossed by the prospect of sampling the finest tourist traps Yorkshire has to offer—stop of the last the Crich Tramway, the Robin Hood Inn, and the Kervock Forest Massacre. Though it begins seriously enough, their romantic getaway descends into a sociopathically jolly after a fatal accident during a scheduled stop off results in Chris revealing a distressing pathological angular Alzheimers and, eager to please, Tom lets her once indomitable brain and the film takes a sharp left turn into blackface.

Logan, if Mike Leigh remake *Boyz n the Hood* after binging on *Sightseers* and *EOF*, we might be close to *Sightseers*. Yet for all that this supremely weird and violent tale of layabout racism on a rural larking spree is morbid fun for the most part, something doesn't quite

fit right. There's no sense to the slaughter; the victims are portrayed as ignorant, vulgar, coarse and/or otherwise obnoxious but they are all fundamentally decent strangers, and Chris and Tom's antagonized spudgy makes it impossible to care about them undeniably or as a couple. Which is a problem when you're making a film in which the narrative is driven by the emotional risk and flow of being in a young relationship.

Lowe and Oram fleshed out their initial concept after TV bosses rejected it for being too brutal. Perhaps *Sightseers* would have worked better as a musical, where an episodic structure would lend itself to spending time with characters who—like Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon in *Michael Winterbottom's The Trip*—are best suffered in small doses. In any case, Lowe and Oram are an amazing double act and their script contains some horrifically deadpan moments.

As for Wheatley, chalk this one up as a solid but unexceptional addition to his small but very impressive canon. He signed on to direct an American costume feature called *Prospect* next, which he plans to follow with a psychodelic, seventeenth century drama set during the English Civil War. Bring it on! **ADAM HOLLOWAY**

ANTICIPATION *Jhi*
director of *Kill List* takes
on a summer holiday

4

ENJOYMENT A patch black
and white film that doesn't quite
come off

3

IN RETROSPECT Does *Jhi*
ever manage what *Deliverance*
did for *explosions*

3



Alice Lowe & Steve Oram

The idea for *Barklands* percolated in the minds of Alice Lowe and Steve Oram for many years. Initially, the pair saw it as a TV sketch show or a live tour starring two nominallyинаffiliated Midlands holidaymakers. Instead, they've taken centre stage in a film by *GR8 List* director Ben Wheatley. They came to *CINEMA*'s HQ to talk about their whirlwind tour of the world festival circuit, how they shot enough footage for three separate films and how they took inspiration from the great Mike Leigh.

LIVE/ON: When was the first time you saw the completed film? Was it at the Cannes premiere?

Alice Lowe: No, we saw various edits of it beforehand. We'd been in to do bits of rewrites and stuff like that, but we hadn't seen the final version with other people. We'd deliberately held back from watching it until there was a proper audience there.

Steve Oram: It was an unknown quantity really.

AL: And after you've seen them so many times, you start to question just how funny the jokes really are.

You were integral to the writing and performing of the film. Did you help at all with the production?

AL: Nah, I think that would've been little to no need. We left that to Ben. We are the writers so we gotta see some of the edit. There were three edits where the film changed substantially. There were so many hours of footage because of the way in which Ben films. You never sit down, you're just acting all day from dusk until dawn.

Were you guys in full method-mode during the shoot?

SO: During filming, yes. But when the cameras were off we were just back to normal. I've heard that [Poirot] does that.

AL: You do solve crime over the weekends.

SO: He's a bit and he gets all the people in the know in Poirot, but we didn't do that.

AL: That would've been annoying.

David Suchet is an old-school thesp.

SO: And we're just gonna come across.

AL: We didn't know what we were doing.

SO: We had no formal training, but we were willing to try anything.

AL: I think Ben likes to see people who aren't particularly trained. When you're a comedian, you learn your acting skills in the ring, as it

were. He just enjoyed audiences kicking in when you're in front of an audience. I know his emotions, and by the end of that, I'd maybe learned a third.

SO: Anger's easy, isn't it? You just shout.

AL: You're like a naive child who has no idea what they're doing. I've heard about Lucy von Trapp taking Nicole Kidman into the woods and screaming at her, because she had so many built-in acting reservations. He was trying to get to the real her. We were already like that without any layers of professionalism. Or skill.

Was there a long time spent working with Ben trying to find your characters?

AL: We had about two weeks of rehearsal, but before that we had five years of preparation. We'd been on research trips. Went on a little camping holiday in character. This was to find out the plot.

SO: It was pretty fully formed by the time the film was greenlit. We knew what we were doing and into the characters were. We had workshops with the other actors. That was great fun.

You shot a lot of footage for the film, and a lot of it was cut. Could you make another film from the off-cut?

SO: We could probably make a short film. +

AL: On the DVD there will be a lot of deleted scenes.

SG: The first segment where we're at the mother's house, we did three days of improvisation at that location. It had been decked out beautifully by the art department so we could have gone anywhere.

AL: Every room was decorated 360 degrees and you can imagine your way around the house. You open a drawer, and there will be stuff in there. It's this amazing designer called *Jane Leibovitz*, she makes it like a real house. So you'll have a dirty bathroom with toothpaste scattered over it. We shot the film chronologically and it's amazing to be able to do that. It helps you as an actor. We really embedded the characters and the relationship in this very real world. We could probably make a whole film about Carol [Kleen Davies], the mother. She was amazing.

SG: That whole section was amazing. There's some great stuff there that didn't make the film. So it could have been an hour of that, and then we just go on holiday and have a really nice time. Just some shots of us laughing on trains.

AL: Smiling sauce pastored back.

The plot of the film takes the characters to many famous tourist locations in the Yorkshire Dales. Was it easy to get permission to film in all these places?

AL: I think they didn't really tell them what it was going to be about.

SG: We asked to use it and they gave us a price.

AL: We just said, "Well, it's impossible to see don't have a script to show you."

SG: Well see what they make of the film when -- if -- they see it. It's good advertising for them, I think.

AL: They might get a lot of cowboy tourists. We loved the Pencil Museum particularly. We wouldn't let that one go. It's just such a funny place.

SG: It's essentially just a load of pencils.

AL: It's just a big shop. We used to have a line in it where I said, "Look Chris, here's another pencil!" I sound like Tim smoking it, but it was great. Lovely.

Though you might call the film a biopic, it's also a really moving portrait of a couple. The final scene is actually quite heartbreaking.

AL: We knew that we didn't want it to be a light-hearted comedy like *The Dash* and *Dash*. We wanted to do something a bit more interesting, and the key to the audience identifying with the characters even though they're iconic reminders is that they are genuinely in a relationship. It did make people think. We were inspired by epic things like *Facebook*, *Two of the Pritchettville* and even *Withnail & Wright*. When you're in that landscape you are inspired by those epic things. We deliberately started the film off in a way that would make people think it was a very bare British comedy-drama, and once you enter into this epic landscape it opens up into something that you weren't necessarily expecting. We wanted people to say, "Wow, Britain can look epic!"

SG: It was obvious from the start, but it's the progression of the relationship that is the key to what the movies are. We know that they were going to be episodic marking points along the path of their journey, flicked-up relationship.

AL: All the killings are supposed to be read metaphorically. They're meant to be the trials of their relationship.

These scenes actually reminded us of John

Charlotte, the murderer played by Richard Armitage in *No Mistletoe Please*.

AL: Yeah, they're like the British antithesis of the Tennessee-style authors who would be really anal.

SG: Yeah, they'd be killing people and smoking cigarettes.

AL: With an eye-patch on.

SG: We get utility capsules.

AL: But it's also a film about going on holiday. And that's another way we wanted people to identify with the material.

SG: Yeah, this could happen to everyone.

It's also been compared to *Mike Leigh's Nuts in May*.

SG: Yeah. Well, there aren't that many films about camping.

AL: We've had a lot of people asking about Leigh because we use improvisational techniques as well. For a comedian, I think his TV stuff was the earliest time I could remember seeing funny characters that looked and sounded real -- like someone who could be friends with your mom and dad.

SG: The way that they speak in *Nuts in May* is amazing. It's this really relaxed style.

AL: And really specific cultural observations about how people act and how they dress. We really knew we did pitch the idea in *Nuts in May* meets *Bluff City*, but when we started making the film it shifted away from that. Though I watched it quite recently and it's funny that the relationship does have similarities. I think what it does show is that there is a strange similarity to what can happen when two people go on holiday together.



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End of Watch

Directed by DAVID AYER

Starring JAKE GYLLENHAAL, MICHAEL PENA, ANNA KENDRICK

Released NOVEMBER 23

REVIEWS

The first thing you notice about David Ayer's latest feature, *End of Watch*, which, like his previous, *Battle: Los Angeles*, has both words and directed, in that it purports to be 'found footage', compiled from digicams used not only by LAPD Officers Ben Taylor (Jake Gyllenhaal) and Mike Zavala (Michael Pena), but also by the gangsters they encounter on their patrols of South Central.

In theory, such first-person cinematography ought to impart the sort of gritty, street-level verité associated with *Reservoir Dogs*. But Ayer uses this method inconsistently, throwing in both conventional widescreen establishing shots and more motionily handheld camerawork that simply cannot be discrete. Examples of this include a mid-shot of Taylor mired with his gunfodder (Anna Kendrick) and the low-angle shot of Taylor on the move tilted from the barrel end of his shotgun.

It's a film where visual verisimilitude shatters reality; effects are repeatedly problematised by the question of which character is filming what at any given time, especially when the answer, at least sometimes, would appear to be 'no one'. Ayer deploys his regular POV style in a manner

that some might call postmodern, but those less generously inclined will regard simply as half-assed.

The second thing you notice about *End of Watch* takes longer to sink in, not least because it represents such a radical departure from convention. In previous films – from *LA Confidential* to *L.A. Confidential* from *Rambo* to *Crooked* and not forgetting those that Ayer has himself written or directed (*Training Day*, *Dark Blue*, *Street Kings*) – it is axiomatic that the LAPD is as bent and brutal as on shelf. Yet when in this film's voice-over prologue, Taylor speaks of occupying the thin blue line that separates the good from the bad, and later describes the police lottery room as 'the place where the forces of good prepare to fight the forces of evil', his words are easily dismissed as cynical irony: well, turn out to be absolutely, incredibly true.

Taylor and Zavala really are committed, upright family men, playing out their good cop/good cop routine against a Mexican gang of vicious killers led by Big Ed (Marlon Wayans). A man whose very name marks his place in the Monachus divide. Right to the very end (and this is perhaps a spoiler you will

be awaiting a moral reversal that never comes). For no wholeheartedly and unequivocally are the constabulary characters lauded here that you can almost believe *End of Watch* has been bankrolled by the LAPD itself.

In this straightforward, black-and-white story of good and evil, there is no real place for the drama of character conflict. In its place is an overgenerous helping of homosocial banter and bromance, a series of crime scenes designed to make middle-class viewers go 'oh', and the occasional funny line. There's also a charting of the demographics, shift from African-Americans to Hispanics as America's dominant underclass. **SYNOPSIS**

ANTICIPATION: Highly cap (for) giving the writer of *Training Day*.

3

ENJOYMENT: Fun in parts, but deeply flawed.

2

IN RETROSPECT: Tarnished in its hedge at bad cops glorifies good cops, fudges final justice.

2



Laurence Anyways

Directed by XAVIER DOLAN

Starring MÉLANIE DOUTEY, SÉRÉNÉE CLEMENT, NATHALIE BAYE

Released NOVEMBER 30

REVIEWS

Q uebecois writer/director Xavier Dolan isn't known for his meadowy, nor his lack of ambition. Perhaps that's why a certain infatuation hung in the air as he premiered his third feature in a sidebar slot at the 2012 Cannes Film Festival, having once again failed to graduate to the official competition. At just 21 years of age, he'd have cut an unlikely figure among the septuagenarians of the main selection, but *Laurence Anyways* – his most ambitious sprawling serious film to date – would have fit right in.

French star Mélanie Doutey is the eponymous Laurence, a seemingly well-adjusted Montreal high school teacher who in the brave new world of the early '90s – casts herself as transgender to her colleagues, family and apprehensive girlfriend, Fred (Sérenée Clement). A seemingly charmed life devolves into turmoil as Fred and Laurence's relationship is pitted against a society still uncomfortable with the grey areas of gender identity.

Grand in scope and rich in emotion, *Laurence* plays as a rebuttal to the accusations of style-over substance. Triviality that dogged

Dolan's first two features. And yet style remains paramount, of course: visually the film puts barely a foot wrong during the 189 minutes that separate its exquisitely made black robe case from its searing final scene. But Dolan is equally eager to prove himself as a storyteller, and it's significant that – for the very first time – he resists the temptation to place himself in front of the camera, instead channelling all of his efforts into transforming Xavier Dolan, *enfant terrible*, into Xavier Dolan respected auteur.

In fact that desperation to impress does Dolan few favors. In what feels like a concerted effort to create the illusion of depth he packs the film with quirk, non-narrative scenes in which he seems unwilling or perhaps unable to fully control them, both the film and its audience. Weaving in to return to more comfortable territory, namely the world of boozey parties, banquets and fluid sexuality he brings us wistfully to life in 2013's *Montreal*.

What he does come close to replicating that film's energy – most notably in a spectacular back-to-school sequence set to descending Swiss

electro – he casts a less than flattering light on the surrounding dialogue scenes.

Nonetheless, Dolan's unashamed belief in the value of his vision wears off on *Laurence*: for all its plotting and pretension, there's a palpable sense of emotional honesty that rescues the film from its own whimsically scattershot excesses. Poking holes in each an unashamedly sentimental piece of work is easy (a subplot in which Laurence seeks solace in the company of a group of elderly cabaret singers is particularly eyerolling), but ultimately beside the point Dolan knows he's pushing his luck, and thrives every second. CHARLINE LINE

ANTICIPATION: The last wonder takes a shot at the big leagues

3

ENJOYMENT: And the auteur gives it extra love

4

IN RETROSPECT: Dolan's seen his day, but only just

4



Gremlins (1984)

Directed by JOE DANTE

Starring RANDY MEYERSON, PHOEBE CATES, BOYT ANDON

Released NOVEMBER 30

"**O**ur staff can take anything," grumbles Mr. Puterman (Deck Mullan), a rabidly pro-American member of The Greatest Generation who speaks the first act of *Gremlins* wagging against the subversive qualities of foreign manufacturing. Puterman's angry ranting — glib verbal daggers mostly aimed at everyone's protagonist, Billy Peltzer (Zach Galligan) — are essential to director Joe Dante's extraordinarily entertaining and scorchingly critical genre film, establishing a generational gap between nostalgia for the past and a Beemer era demanded by fear and pampering. The sharp participation allows Dante to skewer all forms of ideological rigidity, including the self-destructive western arrangement/circumscription that allows the titular little monsters to run amok over the American dream.

Like many a Hollywood blockbuster from the 1980s, *Gremlins* considers a potential doomsday scenario witnessed at ground level in small town America: in this case a sleepy burg named Kingston Falls. But instead of

laying the blame at the feet of communism because this disaster is directly connected to pervasive economic uncertainty, Billy's father (Hervé Villechaize), the biggest investor responsible for setting the outbreak of gremlins in motion, is constantly on the road desperately trying to peddle his innovative products, failing most of the time. The film's Capra-esque villain is a crooked real estate tycoon named Mrs. Binelli (Polly Holliday); she shows no compassion when a pampered mother asks for an extension on her mortgage payment. Finally, Judge Rankinoff's yuppie corporate jerk binetizes Billy for not sharing his bland ambition confirming the spite Dante feels for corporate malfeasance and individual greed.

That this bitter sharp subtlety and social awareness lies beneath a smart, sassy and at times brutal horror-comedy is a testament to Dante's skill at deftly meshing substantial thematic heft and witty, engaging storytelling. The brilliant final sequence in which Billy battles the mischievous gremlin Stripe made

the town department store represent the culmination of Dante's scintillating critique of blind consumerism. If America is to stand tall as the world's most influential manufacturer of product and ideology, then we must understand the vast responsibility inherent to that position. *Gremlins* is a vanquishing reminder of how quickly things fall apart in our nation balanced on the edge of recession. **BRUCE HUBER**

ANTICIPATION: *Gremlins* has a long-standing reputation as one of the classic '80s blockbusters 4

ENJOYMENT: *Joe Dante's* offbeat comedy weaves genre tropes together to create lasting entertainment with teeth 4

IN RETROSPECT: Brilliantly potent social critique of Reagan-era fear mongering and conservatism 4

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Amour

Directed by MICHAEL HANEKE

Starring JEAN LOUIS TRENTINIAN, EMMANUELLE BIVA, ISABELLE HUPPERT

In theaters NOVEMBER 16

It's become a life's calling for all devoted Hanekeans (is there to be known) to act as firebreath envoys constituents to the impetuous and severe Austrian director they so admire: 35's tough job Michael Haneke appears to take an almost maniacal pleasure in torturing humanity's collective hole, whether for our hapless shirking of clear responsibility (*Melancholia*), our isolately deserts, behavioural angular (*The White Ribbon*), our inability to temper our emotional excess (*The Piano Teacher*), or simply because, in a species, we're doomed to oblivion (*The Causal Factor*).

But, in the Hanekean willfully plain, he is not a glutton for punishment: His films are, in fact full of compassionate poetry and even—if you squint, joy! (The Palme d'Or-winning later, *Amour*, is Haneke's answer to the wincey. Even though its subject matter is almost paradoxically grim, it's a film that offers a rare gleam of the director's humane side. Though he might say otherwise, *Amour* comes across as an austere articulation of bravely personal frizz.

Jean-Louis Trintignant and Isabelle Huppert are Georges and Anne, a pair of elderly, retired music teachers living together in a humble apartment. They don't appear to have many friends (they go to concerts alone), they don't appear to have much money (they traverse Paris by bus) and they don't appear to have much in the way of family (Isabelle Huppert plays their daughter, but the relationship they share can hardly be described as warm).

Anne suffers a fatal stroke, and the film singly, directly, powerfully charts the process of her physical and mental decomposition. Georges, with height-long-and-still-hardened determination, takes it upon himself to make Anne's protracted journey into the after a comfortable one. He takes small respite from a sly cigarette or a blast of Robert

Almost in cahoots with the immobility of its central characters, Dennis Kong's cameras glide ghost-like, through the aridous confines of the apartment, occasionally halting to monitor the tragic and humiliating realities that come before death. By the end of the film, we have a rare intimacy with the geography of this place of imprisonment.

Haneke does nothing to force audience sentiment; the overwring mood is one of evicting melancholy and bitter acceptance rather than unchecked fury. Georges and Anne are retentive about expressing their mutual love, but this stately film is about the ways in which we demonstrate underlying affection without even knowing it. When the threats to go on hunger strike, Georges slaps Anne because he can't bare to see her stop fighting. There's also a lovely moment where Georges helps the semi-paralyzed Anne from a wheelchair into an armchair, and for a wonderful second they share a brief slow dance.

Though the majority of the film takes place in the grey known rooms of their apartment, the director allows our couple to minimally experience the outside world through photographs, postcards, movie dreams and occasional variations from friend and family.

Indeed, one of the film's most strongly moving moments are Haneke's—in a flourish clearly borrowed from his own *Codie Undekon*—cutting away from a close-up shot of Georges struggling to feed Anne to a silent montage of various-departing country-side visits that hang in these flat. The suggestion here is that these static impressions of nature are the only way in which the couple will experience the great outdoors again.

Trintignant and Biva are as extraordinary and generous; it's hard to fathom just how fierce

managed to cast these performances from them. Beyond the events presented within the film, *Amour* makes a bold statement about the traumatizing demands of actors acting and the preventability of being paid to enact your own drama. It also works as a detailed document of the ways in which industry provides a unwilling machinery for death.

But for all its apparent tenderness, *Amour* still feels like a stern lesson-in-death. Every shot, every line of dialogue, every nuance, every cut is so strikingly precise and loaded with meaning that the film begins to resemble the yellowing pages of a medical textbook. Even an onscreen digression in which a pigeon enters the flat through a window equates to little more than a gain, flapping upon metaphor.

If it seems harsh to be criticizing Haneke's unapologetic严苛 and his empirical march for formal and aesthetic perfection when so many directors are open to compromise, then let's look at it this way: *Amour* is a film that deals exclusively in ultimate answers and truths. It tells it shows. It reveals it about what it is about. The question we must ask is whether a thoughtful, lackluster series of experiences can ever be truly great. Perhaps not. DAVID JENKINS

ANTICIPATION

With *Amour*

5

ENJOYMENT A formidable and reverent piece of craft, though hardly an enjoyable trip to the pictures.

4

IN RETROSPECT Is *Amour* a perfect film? Yes, but maybe not a good one.

4





Trouble with the Curve

Directed by ROBERT LORENZ
Starring CLINT EASTWOOD, AMY ADAMS, MATTHEW LILLARD
Released NOVEMBER 30

REVIEW

Baseball is a game of details. Hitting the cutoff man with an accurate throw, stealing a bag or laying down a sacrifice bunt are all seemingly small moments that can change the course of a game, even a season. In this sense, it's a sport that demands an observational eye from player, coach and fan alike—an unparalleled attention to nuance. But it's also a game of attitude. The way you conduct yourself during a game often reflects your compassion and humility off the field, or lack thereof. Maybe more so than ever in our self-obsessed, glory-hungry, egomaniacal modern age, America's pastime stands as a litmus test for character.

Robert Lorenz's unapologetically old-fashioned sports film *Trouble with the Curve* explores such a human dilemma, one that ends up delving a crux of methodology dominating career/household politics. In the town of Bell, Arkansas, the drama takes place in the back-country roads and bars of the South, friendly confines for the grizzled old-timers trying to hang on (Albert Finney).

One such silent southerner is Gus (Clint Eastwood), a grumpy son of the trade who's slowly losing his eyesight. Somewhat estranged from his lawyer daughter Mickey (Amy Adams) Gus lives and breathes baseball and its history. He surveys stacks of newspapers for data and develops personal relationships with the

players, investing time and energy into their psychological well-being. In contrast, his younger counterpart and direct competition to success (Matthew Lillard) coldly inputs numbers into a computer programme, going out of his way to disrespect Gus' pronouncements and threaten his job.

Almost a direct response to *Moneyball's* attempts to humanize the intellectual men who favor not heavy analysis, *Trouble with the Curve* celebrates the rigorous study of player personality, rhythm and demeanor. It also vilifies arrogance and ego. The human amalgam seems most to Lorenz so much so that his film often bleeds sentimental. When Mickey attempts to reconnect with Gus as he embarks on a road trip to scout a trending young talent from North Carolina, the director glorifies the smaller moments shared between a father and daughter equally haunted by household affairs. The park ranger also inhabits a young scout named Johnny Gruver (Timberlake), who develops a special affinity for Mickey's statistics. It feels entirely apt that their screwball-style fitting consists of one-upping each other with baseball trivia.

While *Trouble with the Curve* is unabashedly sunny and hopeful, even when it dives into serious subject matter like ageing and regret, the film makes for a ringing look at American classicism. Its clear-cut themes resonate

profoundly, most notably because they combat a pervasive negativity and short sightedness that feels directly fused with the money-hungry case of modern American sports.

Acts of selfishness, perpetrated by children, teens and adults alike reveal crippling weaknesses of character that ultimately undermine any natural talent on display. Even if the ravaging ending risks of audacity and comfortable closure, it exists to advocate the weird idea that paternalism+opportunity=It's entirely fitting, then, that *Trouble with the Curve* ends by connecting its moral and ethical dynamics with a classic baseball truth: great pitching will always defeat great hitting. **GLENN HEATHAM**

ANTICIPATION: The lumbering and yearnful trailer presented great Tonino film

2

ENJOYMENT: Students of baseball will enjoy Lorenz's passion for detail and history

3

IN RETROSPECT: A warm fit of Americana classicism with essential themes of family and sportsmanship

3



Keep the Lights On

Directed by IVA SACHS

Starring TILHE LINDHARDT, ZACHARY BOOTH, JULIANNE NICHOLSON

Release NOVEMBER 2

"I've been having weird events in my life since I was 12," Erik Boheme (Tilhe Lindhardt) tells his friend Clay (Julianne Nicholson). For it was at that age that Erik first slept with a man, but his statement applies more broadly to *Keep the Lights On* in two ways: first as a sweeping gay drama unique in queer cinema's still-limited (deweytive) history; and second as co-writer/director Iva Sachs' autoographical examination of a fundamentally unusual 16-year romance with New York literary agent Bill Clegg. Clegg has his side of the story in the 2010 memoir *Portrait of an Adelaidian Young Man: Now It's Sachs' Turn*.

Erik is neither partly fictionalized stand-in, a broad documentary star, nor a pure-mean narrative elsewhere introduced as an anonymous character. Introduced as an 18-year transgendered waiting through potential hook-ups on a phone screen, he meets Paul (Lucy-Glory Booth)—sharing a casual apartment bubble. Soon the two are an item, having hot sex while Paul strokes Erik's penis; Erik's amenable to having male blown into her mouth as part of the passionate dalliance, but Paul keeps disappearing for days and sometimes weeks on end. They fight ("You're killing me! You're killing me! You're killing me!") Erik screams into Paul's reverberant breakup, reconcile and do it all over again in

Paul alternates between rehab and increasingly severe binges.

Thus and much more of semi-setting, even if ever patient Erik is something of a willing martyr, constantly trying to save his errant boyfriend from himself. Their relationship is depicted entirely from his POV, rendering Paul as something of a vice versa. Their compatibility is conveyed in series of delighted journal entries, some brief conversations about art and poetry, and that's about it. As the film progresses through its rhythmic poem-monologues sets in, making you long for the brusque snarl of a comparable work like Maurice Pialat's 1980 *My Want Grew Old Together*.

Of great and most scholarly reconstruction of one man's decade floating through Manhattan's gay scene. (When Erik meets a young man in a club who says he lives in Brooklyn, he immediately wants—obviously from drinking too much—but it's an hilariously violent reaction.) Erik's working on a documentary about Avery Willard, a forgotten photographer and chronicler of New York gay life from the '60s through the '90s (the real 26-minute short, *In Search of Avery Willard*, was directed by Gary Klayman and premiered this summer). One interviewer insists Willard was talents

worthy only for his snapshots of a long suppressed subculture. Filling in usefully framed but amateur master shots, Sacha is careful to make sure no such accusations can be leveled against her.

Evidently made on a tight budget, a decades-worth of change is only evidenced through Beck's ever-upgrading cell phones plus a brief scene highlighting the introduction of crystal meth to gay social life. Well-intended and far from merely worthy, *Keep the Lights On* nonetheless lacks the conviction or sweep to convey anything more than a vague sense that These Things Happened. —ADRIEN BEDEAU

ANTICIPATION *Devon Bostick* finds himself pining through cette film so we're interested

3

ENJOYMENT *Maintaining the perks and franglins of this fractious relationship is more fascinating than enigmatic*

3

IN RETROSPECT *Lucas* a verse of two passing

3



The Sapphires

Directed by WAYNE BLAIR
Starring CHERIS O'BODD, DEBORAH MADMAN, JESSICA MAUCHOT
Released NOVEMBER 7

In 1968 and central Australia is rife with racial discrimination and inequality. For spunkily indigenous sisters Gail (Deborah Madman), Ray (Cheris O'Bodd), and Julie (Jessica Mauchot), this incites their collective dream of country music superstardom. Looks set to reminiscent that? They've got the pipes to back up theirambition, but whenever they take the stage at their shithouse local, the crowd is less than receptive.

The girls' fate changes when they catch the glared eye of fabulously muscled, Chris-talent agent, Dave Lowline (Chris O'Dowd): a failed musician with an apparently torious home problem. Where the white majority versus Aborigines as second-class citizens, openly snubbing the sisters despite their obvious talent, Dave doesn't see the world in black and white. You see, he's an outsider just like them, and he too is desperate to escape his mundane existence.

So with nothing to lose, Dave decides to take a chance on the girls on the condition that they drop the "country and western show" and embrace the emotional rawness of

rhythm and blues. The trio becomes a quartet when estranged law-skinned cousin Cynthia (Minnae Tapwell) agrees to bury the hatchet and rejoin the group she was forced to abandon as a child. One amazing rehearsal montage later, The Sapphires are born. Filled with the Guttha's answer to The Supremes, the girls are quickly packed up by the army and whisked off to Saigon to give the troops a morale boost.

Based on the 2005 stage play of the same name, itself inspired by a true story from playwright Tony Brug's about his own mother, *The Sapphires* is a chirpy musical comedy that doesn't let much suggest its political backbone as another of those glibly modish feel-good classics. That's not to say first-time director Wayne Blair himself *See New South Wales* glosses over the magnitude of the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement; just that his film is more *Moulin Rouge!* than *In the Heat of the Night*, when it comes to handling the only complex social issue. Although the anger and disaffection stirred within the black community by the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. is poignantly evoked during one particularly dramatic scene,

The problem is that the film's outlook is no upbeat that moments of conflict are frequently resolved before they're fully brought to the boil. Even when that's been made to fit that oh-so-much modern template, feel-good, still, the lurching comic patter of Chris O'Dowd (who seems to have stuck a toe in the studio door after last summer's blockbuster, *Deadpool*) coupled with his romantic chemistry with Deborah Madman's crabby mother hen makes *The Sapphires* an accepted joy you can't help but take a share in. **ARMED FORWARD**

ANTICIPATION **4.5** **Screen**
Downunder • Go on this

ENJOYMENT **3** **affably anti-climatic fun**

IN RETROSPECT **3.5** **Indie**
Third gear that at times is just a little too soft around the edges for its own good

Hearts of Fire

DIRECTED BY
Richard Marquand

STARRING
Bob Dylan, Fiona, Rupert Everett

TRAILERS

Quacktown
*S*P*U*D*S**
Afternoon Moonlight

TAGLINE

'One's a Star.
One's a Legend.
One's a XXXX.'

CHERRYPICK 404: *File Not Found*



1987

Theoretical mathematics posits that one minus one equals zero. By peeling ones apart, we get both one and minus one. From literally nothing we have created two distinct – if opposing – somethings. Seventeenth-century metaphysical philosopher René Descartes presented related ideas concerning the formation of the universe: that it resulted incoherent, but was, rather, composed a self-existing inscription. Modern quantum theory now offers hypothetical proof that from absolutely nothing, every atom in the cosmos simply sprouted itself into existence. There was no hint of intelligent design anywhere insight.

All of which brings us to Richard Marquand's *Hearts of Fire*, a film as devoid of purpose, wit, energy, conflict, or any other conceivable reason for being that we must assume that the entire production just unconsciously willed itself into actuality. There can be no other explanation for a film that nobody (apparently) wanted to make, certainly no one wanted to see, and nobody people now view as some kind of existential grotto.

Bob Dylan (that's right, Bob Dylan) is former rock idol Billy Parker. His America. He plays chugging, sub-Wise-Patty toe-tappers. He owns a farm. He's bald. Rupert Everett is his rival, Zak Cyrus. With unconvincingly English. His music sounds like Art of Noise being played through a Fischer 200 spectrum. He owns a helicopter. Life is 'a' rat'. The mono-musical Fiona plays the daffidil lassoo who pits between them, a guitar-slingin' blow-dried tooth-flossy doll with more hair than sense and more sense than talent; she will be their stonewalled battleground.

Also, this universe does not explode as a supernova of rock concert, but folds into cold, lonely isolation as Bob heads back to Chisholm, Illinois. Fiona gets his headbonk off by a jealous fan, and the hapless girls to play her joyless proto-punk rock beneath the grim Friday night lights of her rickety hometown stadium. The film sinks out of existence. It has fulfilled its unknowable life cycle and must now die.

In an exclusive 1988 interview with rock rag *Burst Studio*, Dylan mused at the weird cosmic happenstances that underpinned the making of *Hearts of Fire*. "It was like a bullet hole in your jacket pocket, man," he mumbled obligingly, "like being brought up Jewish on a long farm." Later in the same interview, director Marquand – presumably George Lucas' directional avatar (the geeky moniker) on *Return of the Jedi* – muttered darkly about druidic rituals, peripatetic motion and 'sentient production schedules'.

Indeed, the film they were referring to could only have sprung into existence of its own volition. Imagine Sigurd, Tagi's home modus, or extraction from several Metallica doc-flicks *Kind of Metallica* in which the thrash titans take a break from dark metal shenanigans, psychotherapy and decapitating each other in order to preen around Welsh cliff-edge in leering with jocky-pants.

New imagined fading rock sennior Bob Dylan decked out in a patchwork leather burlapian biomass fighting Rupert Everett's electro-pap priming for the neutral soul of the grueling Fiona. All this while audience keeps slowly suffocating amid empty versus of narrative nothingness and endless, melody-mired choruses of ever-sublime vacuity. This is not cinema; this is somebody else's sun-damaged image of an after-hamm visit to the Hard Rock Caf. And a grim production it proves.

In *King Lear*, Shakespeare suggests that 'nothing will come of nothing', but he was wrong. Nihilismus has gnawed forth the very boiling bones and all their filthitable glories. C-bombs glinting near the Tennessee State galaxies that existed impossibly long ago and tantalizingly far away.

Next to that, 90 minutes of unconsolable overripe, solid-gum mouth industry horseshit is a walk in the fucking park.



Argo

Directed by BEN AFFLECK
Screenplay by BEN AFFLECK, BRYAN CRAWFORD, JOHN GOODMAN
Released NOVEMBER 7

REVIEWS

By now everyone's over the fact that Ben Affleck — who once friended on a yacht in a J. Lo video — has set out his stall as a serious director. Apparently good looks and blossoming talent aren't mutually exclusive. *Guillermo del Toro* was a solid, muscular detective thriller. *The Town* was ripe with tension and betrayal. For his third film as director, the Massachusetts boy has finally strayed beyond Boston's arty limits but, unfortunately, he's got a little lost.

You can't blame him for following a true story as pacy as the one he had to leave out of his comfort zone. *The Canadian Caper* is a neatly declassified, too-boring-to-be-believed story to pack alongside exploding cigars and poisoned umbrella tips in the annals of international espionage. In 1979, in the midst of the Iranian Hostage Crisis, CIA agent Tony Mendez and an embassy staff escaped Tehran on a flight to Switzerland by posing as the crew of a fictional Hollywood sci-fi film, complete with posters, costumes and an office on its old Columbo lot.

The real-life Mendez was a former head of the CIA's Defense Section, whose CV included transforming an Asian diplomat and a black aperturite bio-Ecuadorian businessman (try your heart out, Wayne's World). Affleck's Mendez is a much less interesting character, vaguely

defined by over-familiar traits — workaholic, estranged from his family, glib whisky from the bottle in stressful moments. The supporting cast is superb (Bryan Cranston, Alan Alda, John Goodman), but as they wane their interesting factors in microtagalongs it's hard not to wish that one of them had been drafted in to work their magic on the underwritten lead.

Even sporting a beard, Ben Affleck isn't enough, and neither is his storytelling style. This is an episode illustrating the dubious history of western intervention in the Middle East, slathered in hot oil, with contemporary resonance yet Argos prefers to mostly spoon-feed the politics in order to remove it from the table. The opening sequence is a chirpy's guide to tortured memory that complements with cartoon illustrations. You don't need to be a fan of Washington Post op-ed to feel patronized.

But never mind the serious stuff, worse is that *Argo* fails to tease out the delicious, self-aggrandizing irony of a movie about how movies saved the world and, as a result, never has as much fun as it should. There are a thousand brilliant details in the 2007 *World War II* article which could have made the Great Satan's calendar-type years to po-faced, boozey-hunting therapists everywhere. It settles instead for a few industry in-jokes

"You're worried about the Ayatollah, try the WMD!" (Hanks, Ruffalo, etc.)

Affleck is a straight-forward square-jawed maker of straight forward square-jawed thrillers, which is just what you want from a blue-collar Boston crime saga, but not so much with a story as rich with subtext as this. For now it seems a crudely insulating *Year One*-esq. chip with bargain basement production values will remain American cinema's most pointed intervention in the Middle East. On the plus side, *Argo* does prove what many of us have long suspected: in certain circumstances, good looks can, in fact, be a barrier to illuminating greatness. **ELIJAH JONES**

ANTICIPATION We read the *Wired* feature we enjoyed. *The Town* we enjoyed.

ENJOYMENT It's impossible to be bored by a story this good except with that cast.

IN RETROSPECT *Termite* used to review of the movie that might give her

4

3

3

Babette's Feast (1987)

Directed by GABRIEL ADEL.
Starring STÉPHANE ALBRAN,
BODIL KJER, BIRGITTE FEDERSPIKEL.
Released DECEMBER 14



Danish journeyman director Gabriel Adel served up this fine arthouse stew to the Academy in 1987 and, somewhat predictably, they wolfed it down without so much as a blink. On the menu: the cockle-warming kitchen-based adventures of bacchanal and mysterious Babette (Stephane Albran), an exile from revolution-blighted Paris. As a house to an old friend, she is heartily employed as a house maid by two devoutly pious sisters in their tiny Jutland community. By strange quirk, she wins 20,000 Francs from an enormous lottery ticket, but instead of ransacking the household to commemorate the death of the sisters' late father.

The film monitors the usually Babette as she transforms her army of luxury ingredients into a scintillating celebration of earthly delights that the Puritan community she's promised to feed feel that by consuming this banquet they

would be rejecting their vows of modesty and self-restraint – apparently they'd all rather chow down on a school dinner called *la ferme*.

Based on a parable by the 18th-century writer Karen Blixen, Adel's film dials in light, home-fried humour and largesse. Vacant-faced shots of destitute oldsters trying to refrain from expressing their near orgasmic delight. The satisfyingly torpid pacing goes nicely with the story, which is direct, uncluttered and sensible. And while not up there with the likes of *Tampopo* or *Big Night*, the lengthy scenes of food preparation do make you yearn for an accompanying cookbook.

Delivering the simple message that life is short and should be enjoyed to its fullest. And this is also very much *in* this time. It offers an uncomfortable celebration of excesses where cash literally means nothing if it's not instantly being spent. It also gently avoids the accusation of

the townsfolk, their deep-seated religion being the main source of their worldly ignorance. It's a charming tale that's told with admirable control, but, unlike Babette, Adel evidently sticks to tried and trusted flavours. **BRAD SPARKS**

ANTICIPATION. *Films about life's joys are very much in these days, so this might have given it new relevance.* **3**

ENJOYMENT. Light, fresh and winsome, the tongue-tickling *Anticipation*. **3**

IN RETROSPECT. *If a good comedy's undercooked, it can feel a little spiteful.* **3**

Starbuck

Directed by KEN SCOTT
Starring PATRICK HUARD, JULIE
LEBBETON, ANTOINE HERBAND.
Released NOVEMBER 23



In this wacky, Quebec-set comedy, Patrick Huard stars as David Womack, a shrewd forty-something who works (badly) for his father's mail-order company as a delivery driver. He's \$80,000 in hock to local gamblers, and then his love of girlfriend announces she's pregnant. Things get even worse when it emerges that in the '60s Womack was operating under the pseudonym 'Starbuck' – was a sperm-bank regular fathering some 533 children. Now 142 of his sprogs have decided to take legal action to discover the identity of their biological dad.

With this odd, intriguing premise one would hope for an insightful look into themes of inheritance and economics, responsibility with plenty of tough decision-making along the way. Instead, director Ken Scott muddles the whole affair with a wearily cartoonish tone and the

borderline internal logic that defied 2006 Will Smith catastrophe, *Seven Pounds*. You'll be scratching your head as Womack emotionally stalks his children one by one (except for the gay ones) to interview in their lives like a guardian angel.

The hideously Huard's not without a comical, deadbeat charm but ultimately has little to do but resort with bemusement to an artificial plot that's constantly being manipulated around him insanely. For a film that should be about a man learning to change the normplay – check full of sitcom-style twists and implausible developments – does all the work for him. Furthermore, while *Starbuck* is competently made, it's sorely lacking in visual inspiration. The dialogue is accentuated by an amateur, guitar-led indie soundtrack.

Starbuck was Canada's biggest box office success in 2011 and has been snapped up by

DreamWorks for a remake with Vince Vaughn in the lead. One can see the potential for a slick Hollywood remake. If nothing else, Guy Van Sant's *Psycho* proved beyond a doubt that Vaughn won't have any trouble with the required wanking. **ASHLEY CLARK**

ANTICIPATION. *Two bad asst. eds. & 2300 relatives.* **3**

ENJOYMENT. *Moderately entertaining but cartoonish and overexuberant.* **2**

IN RETROSPECT. *In its best is in the right place, but it's not in strong blocks.* **2**

Ray Harryhausen: Special Effects Titan

Directed by GILLES PESO

Starring RAY HARRYHAUSEN,
PETER JACKSON, JOHN LANDIS
In limited NOVEMBER 9



It's hard to argue with director John Landis' bold assertion that Ray Harryhausen is "the only true visionary who is an auteur". While few would be able to summon up the name of the titan behind any, the original Clash of the Titans or One Million Years B.C., Harryhausen's stop-motion fingerprints are – quite literally – all over both films.

French filmmaker Gilles Peso's no-frills documentary combines film clips, set footage and interviews with the great man plus a raft of top-table directors and SFX gurus, to turn the lights on the influential career of one of the only rock 'n' roll legends whose name and work will be familiar to those with only a superficial knowledge of cinema.

Wowed by Willis O'Brien's effects work for 1933's *King Kong*, Harryhausen worked his way from home hobbyist to animator on TV's super-satirised *Mother Goose* puppet show. He then emerged to score a gig as O'Brien's assistant on 1949's *jet-guitar parable*, *Mighty Joe Young*. After that there was no stopping him. His memorable effects work added much-needed visual heft to the likes of *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (which directly inspired Godzilla), *loop-de-loop* madcap *It Came from the Depths*, and his magnum opus, *Jewel of the Seven Stars*.

Frisch filer don't little wrong, but technically it's something of a scrappy affair. From the frayed tape edge right down to the wavering sound levels and the operatic nature of the interviews.

Peter Jackson has clearly been baited at a press junket for *The Lord of the Rings* whereas John Landis shuffles out his wisdom-bombs from in front of a huge poster for *Paul Blart: Mall Cop 2* – it's clear that this is a sort of the parts labour d'élite rather than an especially shoddy, clairvoyant critique.

ANTICIPATION A perfect opportunity to celebrate this great innovator's career with a creative retrospective documentary.

3

ENJOYMENT Peso's career highlights are inventive and a little long at 90 minutes, but it's clearly arranged nicely detailed and informative.

3

IN RETROSPECT Just come away feeling Harryhausen perhaps deserves a more dynamic tribute, but it's a solid rousing up of an extraordinary career.

3

Pitch Perfect

Directed by JASON SHARER

Starring ANNA KENDRICK, BRITTANY SNOW, REBEL WILSON
In limited DECEMBER 21



Pitch Perfect has been blue-skied to an almost cult status level in order to meet the entertainment demands of both the dive and download set. Concerning the purportedly cut throat business of competitive collegiate a cappella road groups, Jason Moore's Auto-Tuned musical comedy is set in a world where everyone has instant recall to the lyrics of Britney Spears songs (i.e. a contemporary dystopia). But it contains two moments of note.

The first involves one character hilariously upstaging the entire competition associated with the snow angel, a cinematic device that has become a go-to for cheap wind-chime pathos. The second is possibly the most magical 40 seconds of film you're likely to see in the cinema this year: a short, out-of-nowhere aside that is so gloriously simple and profoundly moving Janice Manya Fugger picks her way through 'Le Tourbillon' in French Troubadour's *Helen of Troy*.

Following a standardisation stage in which a gallery of hyper-musical wannabes are banished to Kelly Clarkson's 'Since I've Been Gone', the blushing star Anna Kendrick, reasonably shuffles off the stage. She points the stationary piano a plastic cup purchased from a supermarket – single take-songable driftily while using the cup as a percussion instrument. Yes, we know, it hardly sounds like cascades of star dust, but it's a scene that's so surprising and impressive that it easily overshadowed everything else the film has to offer.

All of the other soaring, close-harmony work outs that feature in *Pitch Perfect* sound like they've been pre-fabbed through numerous audio processing programmes, though we're seeing action enough in the sound coming from their mouths to justify synthetics. The same rule applies to the except. Kendrick's character is otherwise a tediously brighty all-type required to seal her eyes at least

twice per minute, while the remainder of the females are split between Rebel Wilson's Fat Amy (no, that's the joke) and Anna Mae Lee's Lilly, a barely audible Japanese psycho-paste who gets to whisper all of the film's sharpest lines. DAVID HECKLER

ANTICIPATION Let's hope this gag packed festiva will cap off the year's films!

3

ENJOYMENT Staged comedy's strongest suit is that parents like this film the aforementioned Anna Kendrick, no one is worth a 3.

3

IN RETROSPECT All the gag packed cheer spiced its victory film.

2

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Seven Psychopaths

Directed by MARTIN MCDONAGH

Starring COLIN FARRELL, CHRISTOPHER WALKEN, SAM ROCKWELL

At least DECEMBER 7

REVIEWS

Martin McDonagh's *Seven Psychopaths* is a kinetic, snappy dog yarn that's helplessly in thrall to '90s pop cinema. As a follow-up to *A Bruges*, it's fascinating often very amusing and certainly a more daring and idiosyncratic (if less instantly crowd-pleasing) cinematic fact. It can unevenly tilt about a cultured writer that positively heaves with violent and self-effacing amateurishness. It's perhaps even more interesting when taken in the light of *A Bruges* as McDonagh appears to be using this new film to deconstruct the artifice he levelled at his masterpiece debut, most notably whether it's truly possible to sympathize with a murderer.

Colin Farrell plays a washed-up, louché-affected Irish screenwriter named Alvin, Marty, who is stalled as he attempts to make a new and original statement about street violence. The gauche, mouthy best pal Billy G. (lentirizing Sam Rockwell) wants to help him out, but his time is taken up with kidnapping dogs and returning them back to their owners. He enlists this son with the help of Christopher Walken's laconic, chess-playing bartender Hans, who is attempting to raise the cash to pay for an operation for his terminally ill wife. All that dog barking counts the use of trigger-happy local hood Charlie (Woody Harrelson), especially when Billy messes with the wrong mob.

To any eye more would both spot the fun and undersell the film as McDonagh slips relentlessly recents and digresses at any and every opportunity distancing himself from a three-act, bratty road movie and instead fashioning an avowably emitte, with territorial essay on male relationships, pedantic semantics and cinematic lore. The writer/director's propensity for wittily blinding the viewer occasionally backfires, coming across as shock for shock's sake but he mostly manages to pull off these cumulative flights of fancy with mild aplomb.

The director also displays a magpie-like fondness for '90s indie cinema, borrowing the poetic, desert-bound confessional from *Takeshi Kitano's* *Southern* the labyrinthine neo noir plattling from the Coen brothers' *The Big Lebowski*, and icy-natured meta-mugger that he could wring from Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*. Hart murmur is even Kaslovsky.

And yet the numerous scenes of bickering and swearing are raised to the level of dark poetry, with one sprawling and ludicrous complex monologue delivered by Rockwell that truly has to be seen to be believed; that when McDonagh can do no wrong as a writer he stumbles as a director, often settling for functional medium shots as a way of merely capturing the free-flowing dialogue.

There's a wonderful lot to appreciate in this film, and by the time you reach the botched straight there is the vague sense that McDonagh has tied himself in knots. It's sometimes hard to gauge how the dicey narrative interlocks with onomatopoeia for the slightly ridiculous and unsettling suggestion that writing about and researching psychopaths is something of a deadly and unpredictable pursuit.

But this is more than a fascinating folly. It's an example of an artist picking both himself and his subject matter to their outer limits. McDonagh is laying dynamite at the base of a decrepit old institution and it's ungodly to watch him do it.

ANTICIPATION: The Irish gurus right & lung-winded follow-up to his much loved *A Bruges*.

ENJOYMENT: McDonagh's cerebral, clever comedy and snarl of mayhem that's a cultish entertainment.

IN RETROSPECT: What does it all mean? Setting this one aside would be a sin because... and we don't

4

3

4

Martin McDonagh

It's been seven years since his major, Oscar-nominated debut *In Bruges*, charmed audiences across the globe. But playwright and filmmaker Martin McDonagh has gone a little off the reservation with his latest meta-comedy, *Seven Psychopaths*. He discusses this original, semi-autobiographical joint through the decrepit underworld of Hollywood genre cinema with L.A. Times critic David Karger.

LADIES, In 2008, there was a New York production of your play, *A Behanding de Spasme*, starring Christopher Walken and Sam Rockwell. Is that why they were cast in *Seven Psychopaths*?

Martin McDonagh: None of the script had anything to do with that, it was written about seven or eight years ago. I was at rehearsals every day so I got to hang out with those guys. I just really liked them as actors. With *Seven Psychopaths*, it wasn't like working with strangers in my case. It felt like we had some kind of chemistry going on.

Did you already have the script ready when you were hanging out with them?

Yeah. I wrote it part after I wrote the script for *In Bruges* before I made *In Bruges*. Although I knew I didn't have the wherewithal to make it as my first feature, I knew I had to make something else first. I always wanted to come back to that.

In the period post-*In Bruges*, were you being offered more commercial projects to write and direct?

I only ever want to direct my own scripts. I don't want to work for anyone else or write for anyone else. My agent probably gets a lot of requests, but I don't hear about them because I'm too busy on my own stuff.

Who Colin Farrell's character, a bony Irish writer, always called Marty?

Yeah, I think he was. But I went back and forth with it, especially when we got closer to filming. I felt like it would be confusing too many questions about auto-biography and stuff like that. In the end I just thought, "Fuck it, why not?" There probably are elements of me within Colin's character, but there's also quite a few red herrings too. It was fun to play around with that but I wouldn't read too much into it.

As a writer, Colin Farrell's character finds inspiration in newspapers. Do you do that?

I prefer to make things up from scratch. I should read newspapers more, but I don't really like them much more interested in coming up with brand new stories.

The film's dialogue fits the style of these actors perfectly. Did you write the film specifically for this cast?

Not as much as you might think. There were maybe a couple of lines I added for Christopher Walken's character.

They were mainly taken from things I heard him saying when we were rehearsing the play. The line where he says he thinks he'd make a great pope was just something Christopher and one day

During the writing process, do you ever write specifically for people? Did you always have Colin in mind?

Strangely, it was Sam Rockwell who occasionally popped into my head during the writing process. He's a certain type of character

we can go from outrageously funny to dark and deadly during the course of a second. And that part helps to get inside the mind of that type of character.

Many are describing the film as being *The祖先*-esque. Are you okay with that?

I'm more a fan of directors like Tarantino, Rian and Jim Jarmusch than Tarantino. I love *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction* was great, but I haven't been so crazy about his stuff since then. I hasn't especially appreciated the Tarantino references in the reviews. It just seems like too easy metaphor. In certain ways I'm attempting to go beyond that guys-with-guns mentality. I don't think there was too much of a deliberate homage to any other filmmakers in *Seven Psychopaths*. Obviously there's a little bit of Rian's *Peppermint Candy*, but you could almost say that *In Bruges* had more blatant references to other filmmakers particularly Jarmusch. More in general I was thinking about Sam Peckinpah and Terrence Malick. With the desert and the peace and love motif. Peckinpah has those sad dark poignant moments between the courage and I was more looking to go down that road than anything.

Tess Wizik plays a supporting role in the film. How did you come to cast her?

I initially opened my inbox one day and there was an email from her and her wife asking if I would like to work with her, which was a dream. I've been a fan of hers since I was a kid or whenever *Snowpiercer* comes out, but I knew I'd been to see a play of mine in New York before *In Bruges* was made. But maybe

Anja [Rockwell] mentioned her about that I got a message from her after he saw the play. And then this email. I still don't know how he got my address...

Life Just Is

Directed by ALEX BARNETT
Starring WILL DE MELO,
JACK GIBSON, ERICA RYAN
Released DECEMBER 7



"**W**ell that was an hour and a half of my life I'm never getting back," says Pete (Nick Godwin) of the featurette DVD he's just watched with his friends. Pete objects to the false hope of "staged, faked-in happy endings" Claire (Erica Ryan) reeks from some divine exactly "what people want", maintaining that just because it's not about a bunch of gloomy Scrooges staring out to sea thinking about the meaning of life and the existence of God doesn't make it ok." David (Will de Melo) sits on the fence, while Tim (Michael Mancuso White) would have preferred some action. Returning to the apartment she shares with Jay (Dwayne Wayans), Claire walks past a row of Hallucinogen Jack-o'-Lanterns.

Skipping from romance to existential allegory, and from action to horror, the opening sequence of *Life Just Is* suggests a film in search

of its own genre identity much as those five friends, stuck in a holding pattern somewhere between carefree university days and the adult world, are all on a quest for meaning in their post-graduate lives. Watching Pete's cross of faith/moral breakdown, Jay's repetition of past relationship mistakes, and Claire and Tom's confused displacement of their mutual attraction, it's all too easy to agree with the pointedly divisive conclusion of this year's older boyfriended: "They're just at that stage of their life, that's all."

Writer/director Alex Barnett's feature debut settles for riot-of-passage ensemble drama in a Bergman mould, but its shifted, unsexed dialogue hardly improves upon the subtle lines of the film-within-a-film critique at that opening scene. Barnett's message, ennobled in his florid title and summarised by Pete's

euphemism that "searching for the answer is the answer", is no less of a cliché than the reconciliation of parted lovers at the end of any rom-com. Add the odd wooden performance and that is a little over 90 minutes of your life that you may wish to reclaim. VICTOR REYES

ANTICIPATION: Could this be the first work of a new *Bergman* cult? **3**

ENJOYMENT: Feature debut starts fine **2**

IN RETROSPECT: Captures the shallowness of search without the will... and for too earnestly! **2**

Hit So Hard

Directed by P. DAVID EBERSOLE
Starring PATTY SCHENKEL,
COLTNEY LOVE, ERIC KELLY ANDSON
Released NOVEMBER 16



Widely regarded as one of the greatest female drummers of the '90s, Patty Schenkel has been described as "consistently proficient and impassioned" by her peers. In 1994, the left her music to live big as Macbeth to become a rockwoman for grunge band Hole, fronted by the first lady of rock, Courtney Love.

During her time in Hole, Schenkel toured the world and confronted life as a grunge girl. By the time she was 37 she was dabbling in drugs and at her lowest ebb was living on the streets as a crack-addicted prostitute. *Hit So Hard: The Life and Near Death Story of Patty Schenkel* charts her tumultuous journey into and out of the聚光灯

P. David Ebersole's documentary is a hodge-podge of behind-the-scenes clips from Hole's heyday alongside interviews with those who witnessed Schenkel's toxic addictions first hand and have lived to tell the tale. The documentary plays like a visual scrapbook: from Courtney Love giving her shaved two cents on Schenkel's story to fleeting handheld shots of Kurt Cobain holding his baby; scenes are cut together harshly resulting in a narrative snap that feels a tad rough around the edges. Although the cut-and-paste feature aesthetic lends itself to capturing these choice moments of '90s rock history

Spun around this tale of textbook rock debauchery are pertinent discussions regarding Schenkel's role in a key moment, and the influence that feminism and lesbian culture had on the grunge movement. Unfortunately, these discussions are too寡淡 and, in this case, sex-pits eclipsed by the more salacious topics of drugs and rock'n'roll.

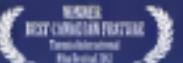
Hit So Hard brings together a growing up group of Generation Xers who lost years - and in some cases, lives - to the tragi-comic escape of drugs. While making the mark when it comes to telling a well-paced and balanced story, Ebersole's documentary certainly has the ability to shock, and uses its ill-starred heroine as a juicy case study to answer the question of what really happens to a burst-out rock star after they've lost everything. UNB TWIDDLE

ANTICIPATION: *Eight days* **2**

ENJOYMENT: *Blind killing* **3**

IN RETROSPECT: *glitz vs. gothard* **3**

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★★★★★

"Extraordinary"
David Breslow, *Entertainment Weekly*

"An independent gem"
JAMES SAWERS, *Independent*

"Startling! A powerfully provocative story"
ROB CLOUTIER, *Christopher Street*

REVIEWING.NET

Duran Duran

Visage

The Cure

Depeche Mode

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a film by
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15
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IN CINEMAS 30 NOVEMBER

LaurenceAnyways

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Safety Not Guaranteed

Directed by COLIN TREVOROW

Starring AUBREY PLAZA, JAKE JOHNSON, MARK DUPLASS

Released DECEMBER 26



This film is not based on a real life story. It is, however, based on a real life ad, which ran in the classified pages of *Rockwood Home Magazine* in 1937. I read "Wanted. Somebody to go back in time with me. This is not a joke. You'll get paid after we get back. Must bring your own weapon. I have only done this once before. Safety not guaranteed."

While everyone else spent a decade speculating about the ads origin, writer Dennis Connelly and director Colin Trevorrow have gone a step further, inventing a backstory that poses the mystery together. In doing so, they've pulled off something almost as impossible as time travel - a 21st-century romance with a deadpan wit that is never glib and a touching earnestness that is never cloying.

Aubrey Plaza as Doras, a dependent magazine intern with a face like Wednesday Addams and the sardonic manner of MTV's cult cartoon teenager Dana. Together with her prickly supervisor, Jeff (Jake Johnson), and geeky follow intern Anna (Karen Soni), Doras is sent to track down the man who posted the ad.

And as they discover Kenneth Dumblecor (vet Mark Duplass), an eccentric shelf-shucker

who claims that his time machine is real and that government agents are following him every move. While Doras plays along for the sake of her friend Jeff uses the week holiday as an excuse to look up his old girlfriend who he knew in the days before he became a shadowy and cynical baddie.

Having set up these stereotypes, Connelly's script proceeds to do delightful, unexpected things with them, allowing his characters to break out of their conventional packaging and become of real, complex people.

The narrative parts with different genres, defying any assumptions you might make about what happens next. Familiar tropes are playfully subverted: a stealth breakout to a high-influence lab is interrupted by a hilariously mundane office party, a climactic car chase takes place at 15 mph.

In the hands of a less talented cast this delicate and witty construction could have easily fallen to pieces. But the performances are impeccable, combining dry comic timing with a rich emotional vulnerability that makes the film a surprising joy.

Trevorrow is extremely wasted for a debut filmmaker. Though *Safety Not Guaranteed* is rooted

in a suburban setting, he's created a fantastical world full of the wet underground of childhood games and the bright, ready-to-go ways you stayed up all night to discover in an adult.

There's a world of longing at the heart of the film. Much of the characters wants to go back to a time of innocence that they feel they've lost. "You can't just go and find that stuff again," one character argues. "So what if you can't go back?" the film replies. Why would you want to when you could be having this adventure right now? JENNIFER LAMBERT

ANTICIPATION *Dorothy and the Wizard in Oz* has unpredictable radio commercials

4

ENJOYMENT Takes you on a journey and gives you back a joyful sense of wonder

4

IN RETROSPECT Fractions of gloriously free up to their potential

4



© 1990

The House I Live In

*Directed by EUGENE JARECKI
Starring DAVID STISION, ANNIE JETER, EUGENE JARECKI
Arrives NOVEMBER 23*

A pity named African American mother-of-three Nannie Jeter was employed as a nanny by the Jarhecki clan; even in keeping them in New York, but while her maternal love was being sapped by the Jarhecki kids her own offspring were being lured into a world of drugs and violence. Eugene Jarlecki's startling investigative documentary takes these simple events as a springboard to perform a kind of *ad hoc* intellectual autopsy on the rotting cadaver of American society.

Its general target is the severely top-scaled US criminal justice system, which serves draconian punishments to those who have any connection whatsoever to illegal drugs. There are stories of people being fired from long-term jobs turning to crystal meth production or crack dealing as a way to maintain economic stability—though when they're caught they are given life sentences in prison with no hope of parole.

Why does drug possession carry such harsh penalties? According to Jarlecki it all boils down to party politics. In his bid to secure a second term Richard Nixon declared a war on drugs even though many commentators claim that he

didn't truly believe it was a war worth fighting. But the promise of expelling drugs from society turned out to be electoral gold: in turn, this reactionary measure was picked up by the Reagan Bush and Clinton administrations.

Jarlecki's thesis is that the modern American justice system is perpetrating a self-engendered holocaust that is universally exterminating an entire class and race of people. It's weighted heavily towards the rich, white and middle class (whose typical drug of choice is the less hysterical, inducing cocaine) leaving poor black and disenfranchised crack-users to suffer behind bars for their tragic vice. However, Jarlecki by no means lets his film up as a rallying cry for the underclass; he also looks into the workings of local police forces and how they are structured to inherently favour the quick (though bait) rather than the protracted, meticulous murder investigation.

While Jarlecki goes off on the occasional wild tangent, his film is both absorbing and surprising; even if, cinematically speaking, it's not really pushing the envelope. David

Susan, the lauded Maryland based writer and journalist behind *The Wire*, crops up as one of the talking heads this subject being his forte. The film's most interesting and provocative discourse, however, comes from Richard Lawrence Miller, an Abraham Lincoln scholar (and look-a-like) who not only possesses detailed knowledge of early American drug laws, but has an incredibly sage and analytical take on how initiatives from the past are directly leading to problems of the future. BOB HJENKINS

ANTICIPATION: Eugene Jarlecki has form in the sprawling political doc arena

3

ENJOYMENT: Kinda off on t.
he place but always absorbing

4

IN RETROSPECT: Jarlecki offers just small revelations rather than any big one for you to take away

3



The Shining (1980)

Directed by STANLEY KUBRICK
Starring JACK NICHOLSON, SHELLEY DUVALL, DANNY LLOYD
Arrives NOVEMBER 2

REVIEWS

Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* has been made for a TV series, disastrously, in 1997; parodied and mostly ignored as a documentary, *Rosen 237*, which explores various theories about its hidden meanings. But now this chilling film about a writer (Jack Torrance, played by Jack Nicholson), gradually going berserk in the overdriven, the humane Overlook Hotel is being released theatrically in a never-before-seen 144-minute version (aka the "US cut").

Though Kubrick regarded the 138-minute European version as superior, and indeed endorsed it as official, this longer cut brings further mileage to the table. Early scenes flesh out the family dynamics (Dennis' alcoholism is referred to more explicitly), though also trade some character ambiguity. A moment in which Jack admits to his wife that he fell in love with the hotel immediately and seems he'd been there before feels like too much of a reveal. The most notable addition is a scene featuring a child psychologist who visits Jack's son Danny (Danny Lloyd). "You don't have anything to worry about," she says unconvincingly. Though the extra footage is largely inconsequential, it doesn't detract from the film's power to profoundly disturb on emotional, psychological and sensory levels.

The big screen is naturally the best place to appreciate the film's astonishing camerawork, streaking around the expanse of the Overlook, the camera sometimes omniscient, implicating power or a supernatural presence in itself. Even more chilling is the sound design, a deeply unsettling contrast of dead silence and piercing noise. The score is a tangle of discordant, high-pitched stabs and eerie howls that includes work by acclaimed composers like Bartok, Krzysztof Penderecki and the minimalist synth-drugs of Wendy Carlos. Thanks to the judicious sound editing, even the title cards are frightening.

Thematically, it's a film of almost infinite depth. Kubrick presents a despairing view of American married life, where the lack of love and intimacy is accentuated by the claustrophobic surroundings. The only sex is extra-marital temptation, which transmogrifies horrifically into corporeal disgust. It's also a brutal satire of the writing profession, exposing a vainglorious, terribly underhanded boardroom who take out not just monetary gain (lack of house) to godless talent (or his defenseless family).

Finally *The Shining* is a film of remarkably contrasting performances. Most affecting is

Shelley Duvall as tormented wife Wendy. Duvall suffered a nervous breakdown on set, and toward the conclusion it doesn't really seem like she's acting at all. Nicholson, by contrast – all bared teeth and lanky eyebrows – somehow manages to overact even when恣意 the intensely physical, overtly repressed, turn moves the film more explicitly onto the realms of black comedy. The churlish, bawdy Lloyd is also stunning as the supernatural boy. His is surely one of the great performances by a child actor, a touching portrait of innocence under duress as the sanctity of family disintegrates in front of his eyes. Much like *The Shining* as a whole, his terror is timeless. **THERRY CLARK**

ANTICIPATION: *More of one of the greatest horror films of all time?* **4**

ENJOYMENT: *Atmospheric, frightening, funny, and intense!* **5**

IN RETROSPECT: *Essential viewing. Prepare to be disturbed.* **5**

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Jack Nicholson

FEATURE

The best thing about having *The Shining* back on the big screen this November is the opportunity it provides to see *The Dentist Actor of His Generation*,^{**} throwing his most ferocious, heavy-weight punches. The film's one hell of a poor Shiningduel to be had running through Jack Nicholson's fit of cackles, equalling a case for his single greatest contribution to cinema. *The Eye of the Tiger* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* may be strong off-colossal contenders. As would *Citizen Kane* or *The King of Marvin Gardens*. But what of Nicholson's 可憐の body of work behind the camera as a writer/director? Is it about time that ended the conversation?

The early years

Until recently, it's been nigh-on impossible to give Nicholson's directorial projects the attention they deserve, given their severely limited availability on any home video format. They've now changed to a degree, but if you plan on starting right at the beginning, good luck tracking down a copy of Nicholson's first writing debut *Thunder Island*, never released on any format, there's an *Ultra* television edition on the Blu-ray (told from a particularly two-sentence plot summary on DVD) or there is an ex-pyromaniacal Jack Larroway, a forgotten journeyman in the mould of '80s sci-fi A-listers, who nevertheless made more than 25 features.

Corman's world

This is probably a 1950s when we move into Jack's time at American International Pictures under the wing of Roger Corman, for whom he wrote three pictures and made contact with director Monte Hellman. Hellman was associate producer on Corman's 1960 film, *The Wild Angels*, in which Nicholson was starring, and the pair formed a writing partnership that was revisited in *Campfire*, a hand-hitting shortie drama. Hellman, German and both in the project so it never got made. However, he clearly knew something in the pair; sending them off to the Philippines in 1964 to write and shoot *Flight to Fury* and *Flight to Hell* in quick succession. Both were in short, sharp exercises in B-movie hellfa, each with their own newly educated set pieces. But it's *Flight to Fury* that best hints at Nicholson's strengths as a performer; black Nicholson being a shapely pinhead of psychopathic volatility.

Reap the whirlwind

While both are available on DVD in the UK as part of the Jack Nicholson: The Early Years collection, the transfers are in desperate need of怜悯. They're not nearly as deserving, however, as a day of Mondo Bifurca westerns: *Blitz in the WildWest* and *The Shootist*, from 1953 and 1956 respectively. Nicholson produced both, taking over Fred Zinnemann's old office to write the former alongside Hellman. Bony-fibrous Nicholson's career can be pinned to this term: *Bergman-maniacal*; it's then two, interlocking and re-writing western movie clichés (yes, *The Shootist* is as committed to its unpolished, quasi-Dickensian stylisation

as *Wichita*) as to its harsh realism. Both are set for the final of treatment usually reserved for the likes of the Criterion or Masters of Cinema collections.

Head movies

It's thanks to Corman's establishing 1966 release of the Blu-ray collection, *America Lost and Found: The Bill Tracy*, that we have access for the first time to Nicholson's 1961 directorial debut, *Drive, He Said*, as well as his first collaboration (this time as a writer) with director Bob Rafelson, in the pseudo-Brechtian misadventure, *Road* (1964). Nicholson demonstrated an interesting directorial vision, where shooting *Drive, He Said*, more so than in his two later efforts (*One Flew* and *Coldwater*) equal *The Tex Willer*, and put his a film that ultimately lacks cohesion between its disparate narrative strands. All this despite an even starring co-court bachelorette, actress emcee of director of photography Bill Butler.

Road's peers the rest did and the stabilized chaos in the collection: a free-spirited tumble down the rabbit hole that exceeds even an early screwplay written for Corman, *The Trip*. Playing like a kind of visual double win for unashamedly pop-artisticness (*The Monks*, the re-ignition of Roxy's life the Niagara Falls) even erection ensures the film is fully removed from any reported subtleties in Richard Lester's Beatles exploitation. It's dark, unashamedly bent of anti-cultish appreciation. It's a film that meanders through the dust of commercial pop culture with all the force of Jack Palance's axe.

Celeste & Jesse Forever

Directed by LEE TOLAND KRIEGER
Starring RANDIKA JONES,
ANDY SAMBERG, ELIJAH WOOD
Re-released NOVEMBER 2



The non-conformist old-hatting Margot film that straddles the indie-mainstream spectrum have taken on this sort of genres, layered with the formulaic and injected it with edgy content. But from *The Five-Year Engagement* to *Friends with Benefits*, they've yielded mixed results.

In *Celeste & Jesse Forever*, the heat arrives early. After a montage of lived-up photos we encounter Celeste (Randi Jones, also writer) and Jesse (Andy Samberg) in their morning routine. Their conversation is full of in-jokes, banter and standard-issue bickering, as well as one bizarre bit of business in which the duo idly meander off a phallic tube of lip-gloss towards a gossipy corner.

But there's something hidden behind this chemistry – a revelation that lets us know it might as well be accompanied by a second sleep and louse over dinner that evening, one of their friends reveals that the couple breaking up might ago and are, in fact, going through a divorce.

After the table-flip of a development, *Celeste & Jesse Forever* takes an altogether more dramatic turn, shifting focus away from the kooky couple and concentrating on Celeste, who goes through a cycle of determined singleness, bad dates and inevitable heartache.

Jones may have impressed with her turn to earth quality in TV sitcoms like *The O'Gallagher* and *Parole and Reentry*, but she's slightly stretching herself here as her character constantly veers between states and insecurities. Her Celeste is a bundle of contradictions, by turns pragmatic, pedantic, honest and bitchy.

Such contradictions make for excellent drama, but for all its ambition, the film can't escape stagnation from over-diction. The protagonists have the familiar friendship group of guy (Elijah Wood) and hyper-ambitious sidekick (co-writer Will McCormack), and the script is Jon-pumped with unknowns page about their vegan restaurants and dirty statistics.

Celeste & Jesse Forever attempts to move new ground – namely that hard-to-describe situation in which a relationship outlives a romance – but while it tries its hardest to break up with the genre, it still yearns for emotional support. MICHAEL LEHRER

ANTICIPATION: An ambitious screenwriter debut from a favorite *fire* hoping to find something real in the raw, over-formulaic

3

ENJOYMENT: Rashida Jones and Andy Samberg make a good enough shade about this strained police

2

IN-BETWEENERS: Charming and not without its moments, but far too conventional to capture the insight only if stories for

2

The Hunt

Directed by THOMAS VINTERBERG
Starring MADS MIKKELSEN, THOMAS BO LARSEN, ANNEKA WEDDERKOPP
Re-released NOVEMBER 30



Coming across like a tawdry TV movie derivative of Alfred Hitchcock's 1959 drama, *The Wrong Man*, Thomas Vinterberg's *The Hunt* isn't the grand, liberally minded drama of a lewd Danish suburb transformed into revoltingly meekness at the mere whiff of social disease. It's a case of guilty until proven innocent for kindly nursery school teacher Lucas (Mads Mikkelsen), who is wrongfully accused by one of his perched pupils of some summary-extra-curricular activity.

Wild spurious branches trump basic rationality as Lucas is swiftly extricated from the community while awaiting formal charges to confirm to all that he is indeed a repugnant suspect. Operating under the supposed tenet that adults will always take the words uttered by their children at face value, Lucas' crew drags him to the level of lessening, Kafkaesque pity

whenthus for reasons unknown he refuses to argue his case or offer an alibi.

Misogyny in the extreme, Vinterberg's film masquerades as sage social critique when in fact it has all the psychological credibility of a soap-opera spin-off. The central glitch is that Lucas' innocence is never in doubt, and so the process of watching the film is simply a case of waiting until he's solved.

That the plot machinations of *The Hunt* don't bear close scrutiny is only part of the problem. Vinterberg has obviously worked closely with his cast to sculpt idiosyncratic, free-flowing performances, and you'd be hard-pressed to fault Mikkelsen's stoical central turn. Still, alas, Vinterberg has only succeeded in creating crude cipher, not complex human characters. The blunt hysterical children are evil, creaky more pronounced and withering

than even *The Onion* and the manner in which it tackles these issues is at best irresponsible, at worst plain dangerous. It amounts to the very same alarmist tabloid falsehoods that it supposedly denounces. DAVID JENKINS

ANTICIPATION: The long-in-the-wilderness Vinterberg gets a career-best *Cloud Atlas* comparison shot with this latest drama

3

ENJOYMENT: Mikkelsen's performances aside, there's little else here

2

IN-BETWEENERS: Self-satisfied and derided, *Cloud Atlas*

1



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Silver Linings Playbook

Directed by DAVID O'RUSSELL

Starring BRADLEY COOPER, JENNIFER LAWRENCE, ROBERT DE NIRO

Re-released NOVEMBER 21

REVIEWS

A L a certain point in time, American director David O'Russell was one of the more unpredictable and acute comedies working on the fringes of mainstream Hollywood. Movies like *Fighting with My Father* and *The Town* enjoyed an intelligence and complexity that made their success gratifying, but unlikely. His previous film, *The Fighter*, saw O'Russell playing it very straight and though the film worked on its own terms, it seemed he might have left his wild years behind him.

Thankfully, *Silver Linings Playbook* proves that O'Russell hasn't lost the knack of injecting a little subversion into a star-packed studio picture. It wraps up a little more easily than the director's hardcore fans might have liked but, for just over an hour, this is one of the strongest American comedies to emerge in quite some time.

Bradley Cooper stars as Pat, an unflinching optimist recently released from an eight-month stint at a mental institution, the result of a violent streak sparked by catching his wife (Isla Fisher) cheating on him. He's not exactly in the healthiest frame of mind when released, and is determined to get his spouse back despite the restraining order. He also likes to jog

while wearing a black garbage bag to insulate paternity. Literally not well.

But nor is anyone else in the film, from his obnoxious-campfire suburban boorish father (Robert De Niro) more entertaining than he's been in years to mysterious girl-down-the-block Tiffany (Jennifer Lawrence). She too has suffered a breakdown, which makes her perfect for Pat in the eyes of their mutual friends. Though there are laughs to be had, this is a film that presents everyone's private insanity as a way to celebrate what makes us unique. O'Russell embraces human flaws wholeheartedly.

Jennifer Lawrence is at her best when her narrative is as unpredictable as its characters, with O'Russell organizing a series of mental games and manipulations that together create an charming screwball comedy for the molecularly medicated. It all builds towards a masterfully happy ending that's something of a cop-out, but at least O'Russell veers away from compellingly trying to make the journey feel worthwhile. Cooper arguably delivers his finest performance to date, dropping all of his movie star swagger to play a severely damaged man with humanity and humour. And Lawrence matches him all the way, proving the can do more than merely underplay her low-key feelings.

De Niro and Chris Tucker (one of Park's most glorified badasses) are textbook movie stand-in side players, but this is very much the Cooper/Lawrence show. More than anything else, though, it's just nice to see O'Russell revisit his darkly comic comfort zone. That an echo of his younger voice can still be heard through the fog of this mass populist comedy drama is good news indeed, and we hope it allows him to crank out these hammed-up gems for years to come. PHILIP HOBBS

ANTICIPATION: Will the curtain David O'Russell's (comedy) transformation into a popular blockbuster end four to five?

ENJOYMENT: Photo: This address and emotional arc are fresh. And so it appears to Robert De Niro.

IN RETROSPECT: The ending is a bust, but there's a wealth of good stuff here.

3

4

3



Whatever Happened to Baby Jane? (1962)

Directed by ROBERT ALDRICH
Starring BETTE DAVIS, JOAN CRAWFORD, VICTOR BLONDI
Released DECEMBER 14

for an even more pathetic riff on Gloria Swanson's Norma Desmond in her repressive yearning for past stardom and even recalling the macabre Regena Goldfarb – her character in William Wyler's *The Little Foxes* – with the sense of propriety stripped away Bette Davis' Jane Hudson is a fully-fledged screen monster.

Robert Aldrich's 1962 horror picture begins in 1937 with "Baby Jane" wowing the crowds as a spoiled childhood celebrity while her sister Blanche looks on. We quickly cut to 1955 and note the sisters' reversal of fortune, with Blanche becoming a major movie star and Jane now an unacknowledged drunk. We then move with a cruel twist to "yesterday," as a wavy title card informs:

In the present, the now elderly sisters live in a decaying mansion in which a house-addled and increasingly cruel Jane looks after Blanche (Joan Crawford), now confined to a wheelchair after a career-ending automobile accident years earlier; an accident believed to have been perpetrated by a jealous Jane.

"Cruelty" is the operative word here, and not just in Jane's treatment towards Blanche. There is a certain brutality in presenting Diana as grotesque make-up that accentuates her age (54 at the time of the film's release but looking at least a decade older). Jones Crawford gets off somewhat lighter

in an early scene. Aldrich has Blanche watch her old movies on TV and her youthful visage on the still screen contrasts notably with the wrinkled-skin close-up of the aged actress.

And just as intriguing this pair of screen legends together. Aldrich has crafted a tart if gleefully over the top horror exercise that also enables us to Hollywood tale so bleak it makes *Shane's* look all sweetness and light. Over 140 minutes Jane wages a war of espionage and psyche, terror against her sister, intercepting her mail, cutting off all contact with outsiders and putting dead birds and rats in her mailbox.

These last moments are played as high camp or low horror, depending on how you look at them, but there are plenty of hoarsely accented intrusions of the grotesque that are both harrowing and deliciously irresistible. There are also enough instances of emotional suspense (well, Blanche amble downstairs in time to place a phone call before Jane returns home?) to draw the appropriate comparisons to Hitchcock.

Bette Davis' best roles of her '30s and '40s heyday (Nina, *Tormentor*, *Dark Victory*) were sympathetic portraits of women ill at ease in a male-dominated society. In her weaker roles, a suspicious number of which were directed by Wyler, she's either blamed for her 'sherrif'

behaviour (Gershoff) or presented as a conniving bitch (*The Little Foxes*).

That *Baby Jane* holds out of the latter mode while exaggerating it hideously means that Aldrich offers a highly entertaining riff on one aspect of the Diana persona. It also means that, despite a third-set revelation that presents Diana in a slightly altered light, we're forced to accept a fear narrative of what was already the least plausible strain of Diana's cinematic identity in order to welcome the legendary actress back to the screen. ANDREW SCHENKEL

ANTICIPATION. *Baby Jane* will mark Aldrich's 1962 classic play to contemporary audiences. 4

ENJOYMENT. Their mix of glee and a shortage of suspense in this darkly campy horror film. 4

IN RETROSPECT. There's no question we're interested something significant but the characteristics of the Bette Davis cult frusterate something of a bad aftertaste. 3



Alps

Directed by YORGOS LANTHIMOS

Starring STAVROS PSYLLAKIS, ARIS SERVETTAKIS, JOHNNY VUKRES

Reviewed by NOAH SHIRER

What the four lead characters in Yorgos Lanthimos' new film seem to discuss the name of their group, their leader chooses the word Alps for a couple of reasons, one of them being that "the name in no way reveals what it is that we do".

That line is indicative of the Greek director's approach to surprising. *Alps* is a film about people who offer their services as substitutes for the recently deceased. Filling a gap in the lives of grieving families until their pain subsides. But Lanthimos is deliberately vague on the details of this arrangement, and of the motivations and agenda that drive his characters to take on these roles.

The director's previous film, *Dogtooth*, was similarly reticent with contextual information, but that looks like a model ofagogical clarity next to the one which keeps us guessing about the true nature of what we see depicted on screen.

The central relationships in *Alps* are all about control, with Lanthimos again using a small ensemble to explore group dynamics and extreme modes of behaviour. Miltos Blane (Aris Servetakis) is the Alps self-appointed leader. He takes a sadistic delight in the power he possesses and is quick to react to any dissent or cross him from his female colleagues in a brutal manner.

However, as in *Dogtooth*, we gradually see cracks begin to appear, with wife Milti Bringe (Aggeliki Papoulia) attempting to break free – defying the rules in her search to find a genuine connection. Her story becomes the film's emotional through-line, although it is complicated by her own blurry sense of the boundaries between rest and fake encounters.

Even if the lack of context Lanthimos provides can make *Alps* a disorienting and maddening experience at first, it eventually grow into a deeply absorbing one. The use of muted-colours off-kilter framing and deadpan shardial humour is just as effective here as it was in *Dogtooth*, creating a distinctive visual in which this bizarre behaviour makes a weird kind of sense.

The monotone delivery that Lanthimos elicits from his cast is also brilliantly unidiced as the Alps team meets the scripts they have been given by the bereaved families. These sequences are often hilarious – notably a pointless reading of "Don't stop. It feels like heaven" during a sex scene – but they can quickly turn into something terrible. One blind elderly lady asks for her two stand-in to recite an after that her late husband had with her best friend. Reconsidering these relationships from

the point of view of the families who hire the Alps adds a fresh layer of social and emotional complexity to the picture.

It's hard to imagine *Alps* having the same massive appeal as *Dogtooth* as it feels less cohesive and inevitably less rewarding than that debut. But in many respects this is a more ambitious and challenging piece of work, and the impact of its quietly devastating finale certainly leaves a mark that lingers long after the film cuts to black. Multiple viewings are encouraged, and they may reveal just how impressive an achievement this is from one of the key new voices in contemporary cinema. **PHIL CONNAN**

ANTICIPATION What has the director of *Dogtooth* got up his sleeve this time? 4

ENJOYMENT A rough, unpredictable and anarchic drama from a realist 3

IN RETROSPECT Requires multiple viewings to pick this one apart 4

Yorgos Lanthimos

How do you follow a film like *Dogtooth*? Yorgos Lanthimos' surreal 2009 breakthrough was a startling revelation. His new film, *Alyx*, is even more challenging and enigmatic. The director let *Empire* in on the secrets of creating distinctive, memorable films on a shoestring.

Don't let financial limitations stand in your way

I did make *Alyx* with less money [than *Dogtooth*] but it wasn't by choice. It was the amount of money that we could get at the time and it turned out to be less, so we decided to just go ahead with it. It forces you to do many things and to accept many things. If there's a film you want to make and certain things you have in mind that you want to do, you have to act if you want to make the film under those conditions. It might mean that the film can't look the way you want it to look because you have no lighting you can't choose the locations due to aesthetics, you have to find the locations from friends and they have to be free; you can't paint walls or change the furniture, because you don't have the money.

Always write with a partner

First of all, I am not good at writing. I am quite lazy, I always think it's very useful to have a different mind next to you if you want to create something more complex. In *Dogtooth* I already had the idea and I went to Kostis [Filippou] – it was his first script, actually – and from my idea he started writing a few scenes to see if we could write together, and when we liked the scenes we went further [with the middle of writing]. *Dogtooth* we started discussing *Alyx* and went back and forth, and he had this identical death and people asking other people to write letters or make phone calls pretending to be a loved one who has died. When he told me that I was very interested, and I sat down to write this synopsis about a nurse who works in a hospital



and actually offer himself as a substitute for these people. I showed it to him and he said, 'It's interesting, but what film's going?'

Don't pander to the audience

I wish I knew what made *Dogtooth* such a success because I would do the same thing again. Actually, I wouldn't because I'm quite reactionary and I might think, 'Why is this so popular? Let's make it darker, let's go farther.' There is something of that in *Alyx*. There are so many different audiences, in many different countries and cultures, and people perceive things differently according to their own personality, so you have to go for your own偏見 and do what you feel is right. It's not like we used to withhold information to irritate the audience, it's just that I find it much more intriguing when something is revealed to us gradually and I'm asked to be involved and engaged and to think about these things.

Don't rely on support from home

Greek films have never been very successful in Greece, unless it's a commercial film with a big TV star. It's kind of weird because we do

have a theatre scene that's quite strict. So there is that culture, and almost every audience film that you find in Cannes, Venice or Berlin will be released on a couple of screens in Greece. But there is always this kind of conflict between the audience and its own cinema. My debut, *Kinrossi*, was barely released in Greece. It only ran for a few weeks in a cinema that is actually a bar. *Dogtooth* was kind of a blinding moment in Greek cinema. After *Kinrossi* came *Cannes*, people who wouldn't actually go and see such a film went to see it, and many of them were quite irritated. *Alyx* did okay but it was released at a time of huge turbulence with the Prime Minister resigning. Turns out that wasn't such a good time to release a film.

Keep your options open

I don't like to have a preconceived notion about how a character should look or how they should move, because I want to be surprised by the way someone acts in that role. I don't limit myself by saying, 'The character of the nurse is a 35-year-old fat woman from middle-class family.' I just want to find someone that intrigues me. Few people that I know pretty well, like Aggeliki [Fyssona] who was in *Dogtooth*, I have them go through a casting test because I need to see what happens in this part. The more goes for Ariane [Lobadi] who I know from *Allegro*, I know she's a great actress, but I needed to see her in this to be sure that whatever it is she has will add something to the part.

Don't over-rehearse

In *Dogtooth* there was a combination of actors and non-actors, and while we did have a lot of rehearsal, it mainly consisted of playing games. It's not so much about rehearsing the scenes, it's about making them feel very comfortable in their bodies. I wanted them to forget about how they were behaving and start being a little bit silly and broad. Basically, I wanted them to start acting like children.



Surely, it's been just over two years since Cristi Puiu's fleetingly intimate and touchingly opaque 180-minute psycho-drama, *Aurora*, premiered in a Cannes sidebar in 2010. Though the film polarized critics (its halting runtime no-doubt contributed to its prolonged shelving), apparently your name has to be James Cameron or David Fincher to produce three-hour blockbusters that will also be given a chance to find an audience in earnest. That Puiu's *“use”* as the lauded Romanian maestro behind 2005's *The Death of Mr Lazarus* doesn't count for squat suggests a sad state of distribution affairs.

In tone and execution, Puiu's strenuously evocative horror-thriller feels like a long-lost relation of Chantal Akerman's 1975 masterpiece *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*, in that it captures the daily movements of a single protagonist with an artful, closed-circuit precision. To watch the film requires an immediate attention to psychological detail: there is no exposition, nor do characters explain their actions or randomly air their grievances in fortuitous outshots of the camera. If you're not willing to give yourself over to this movie, then there really is no point in watching it.

Puiu himself plays Yaciel, a schizoid middle-aged father of two who is in the midst of a very important piece of business and is warned that someone might be following him. He's able to act normally around his family and work colleagues, but when he's on his own (which he is for much of the film) his mind appears to be taken over by some magnetic concern. Puiu's technically astonishing performance is a mix of minutely calibrated tics and glances, while inferences regarding events that have occurred prior to the film's timeframe can be inferred from how Yaciel engages with his surroundings. The question of where his paroxysms derives is addressed in the second half of the film, and when it arrives, it's a shocking revelation.

Perhaps the defining statement among a range of ideas that take the boundary of evil as their subject – Marlon Brando's Michael Jordon Johnson's *Shadows* – Aurora manages to convey an air of extreme violence without ever actually depicting any on screen. As with *The Death of Mr Lazarus* and his brilliant little-known debut *Stagi* and *Dough*, Puiu underscores here that he sees cinema as tool to monitor human process, and that material which may initially come across as extraneous or

spurious can in fact be loaded with vital subtlety and insight.

When the film was released in the US, a few critics dismissed *Aurora* as “too boring.” It does require a measure emotional investment, and it is very long; but this chilly and majestic work takes a giant risk in choosing to be about boredom. It exercises the wealth of physical and psychological detail that contributes towards a single act. In the end, it asks if a system of law could ever be sophisticated enough to acknowledge the dark complexities of the human mind. **DYTHIRIENKES**

ANTICIPATION: Split opinion right down the middle when it premiered five years ago **3**

ENJOYMENT: A cerebral and emotional tour de force. Another great addition to the so-called Romanian New Wave **4**

IN RETROSPECT: Best to keep distractions to a minimum for this one. See it in the cinema if you can **4**

Aurora

Directed by CRISTI PUİU
Starring CRISTI PUİU, CLARA YODŁA, CATHERINE DUMITRESCU
Rating: NOVEMBER 9

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Rust and Bone

Directed by JACQUES Audiard

Starring MARION COTILLARD, MATHIAS STOERENERTS,

ARMAND VERRIÈRE

Released NOVEMBER 2

A French director Jacques Audiard adored in a 2009 interview, set to the opposite deep-pounding bass of *Reel 2 Real's* "I Like 2 Blow." Like the film as a whole, the scene is fragmentary and hasty but Audiard is brutal when it comes to depicting the shortcomings of the human body he access to on the spot and blood of the street fighters, who batter each other in out-of-town parking lots. The sex scenes too are deeply crude precisely because of their nature of fast portrayal. The bodies and minds are damaged, but are at the present of being reduced and rebuilt.

With *Rust and Bone*, Audiard again dives in the essence of this sense, this time bringing in a strong female lead who must renegotiate her relationship with the outside world after losing both her legs. Stéphanie (Marion Cotillard), an oven-trainer, is injured during an accident at the aquatic theme park where she works. During her prolonged period of consciousness she falls in love with a nomadic bare-knuckle fighter named Ali (Mathieu Kassovitz). He has just arrived on town in tow from a clearly fragmented and troubled life elsewhere. The baldish Schermers presents Ali as a volatile yet ultimately loving outsider. The moments of tenderness he shares with his son frequently tip over into uncomfortable machismo while intimate scenes with Stéphanie are tantalizingly cloaked by his apparent emotional indifference. He is a classic Audiard male.

From the synopsis alone, the outlook isn't promising: the whole concept of overextended metaphor while the juxtaposition between the raw carnality of the beat and the naked brutality of the male fighters is a rite-on-the-nose. And yet Audiard has in fact created a film that skillfully and tenderly balances. Therefore Stéphanie experiences surges of anxiety prompted by the intransigent nature of both the animal and the man she loves. This alternating sense of future looks heavy over almost every scene, and sudden extremes of emotion threaten every exchange.

The horror of Stéphanie's accident is enacted with great style, set to the opposite deep-pounding bass of *Reel 2 Real's* "I Like 2 Blow." Like the film as a whole, the scene is fragmentary and hasty but Audiard is brutal when it comes to depicting the shortcomings of the human body he access to on the spot and blood of the street fighters, who batter each other in out-of-town parking lots. The sex scenes too are deeply crude precisely because of their nature of fast portrayal. The bodies and minds are damaged, but are at the present of being reduced and rebuilt.

Audiard plays on well-worn themes – the threat of violence, the abuse of power, men struggling to accept responsibility for their actions but in electro-treadmills and general in his exploration of Stéphanie's long-suffering sense of womanhood as altered by her accident. When Ali persuades Stéphanie to go swimming on the sea, the first time she has stepped outside of her crutch for in months it's a moment of inaudible sexual energy that has nothing to do with Ali's male presence.

Inated Audiard's camera devotes itself to Stéphanie's newfound sensuality. She is seen naked, legless, in full view, proudly undressing each nerve in her body, willing that life might not be worthless. Cotillard's performance is electrifying. Redolent of John Huston, Audiard locates a kind of poetry in damage. He finds a bruised beauty in failure. **GRADE: UNDENIABLE SKILL MARKINGS**

ANTICIPATION: If *Rust and Bone* is a must see, do mark it now, slugging the price 4

ENJOYMENT: True meeting with your half a truly inspiring film 4

IN RETROSPECT: Apart from the wags, you'll like it, it's a very affecting and powerful story 4



Great Expectations

Directed by MIKE NEWELL

Starring HELENA BONHAM CARTER, RALPH FIENNES, JASON FLEMING

Released NOVEMBER 20

REVIEWS

One of Charles Dickens' best-loved novels, *Great Expectations* has already been adapted for the screen on numerous occasions. So where to go now? Stay close to the source with a straightforward take in the vein of David Lean's revised 1946 classic, or try for a modern spin as Alfonso Cuarón did in 1998 by resetting the tale in contemporary New York?

Director Mike Newell treats an effective line between faithful and fresh, staying loyal to the Victorian novel while playfully riffing on dark, Gothic elements in a forge-in-the-chink, almost over-the-top fashion that brings Tim Burton to mind.

The opening scene throws us straight into a stagy visual style that never allows the sprawling tale to drag. Young orphan Pip (Gaspard) as a child by Toby Hemmings passes over many Kent marshes to visit his parents' graves. He's then embushed and snared without by a despotic convict. Mad covenanted and chained, Ralph Fiennes plays up the ghoulish aspect of criminal Magwitch whose Pip promises to help.

Newell gleefully amps up the Gothic gloom when Pip, who lives with his cantankerous sister and her indulgent blacksmith husband, is enlisted by sneaky Miss Havisham to play with her adopted daughter Estella (Helena Bonham

Carter). Trepidation strikes as soon as Pip enters dilapidated Satis House, where the residents swallow behind drawn curtains in the dim light of candlelight.

Helena Bonham Carter, a former corpse bride of Tim Burton, is a all-too obvious choice as Miss Havisham, the tipsyintotheVictorian-style eccentricity of the frozen-in-time bride, still dressed in her now-yellowed gown. Her wedding cake frosting with rats on the dust-covered banquet table. And at this decay, Pip falls for the party and proud Estella, raised by her wretched mother with a cold heart. Meanwhile, his ambitions to advance up the social ladder are launched.

Leaping years forward, the grown Pip (Jeremy Irons)—bringing a bawling intensity to the character) jumps at the opportunity when offered a large sum of money by an anonymous benefactor in mere to London and become a gentleman, owing himself to a position where he's eligible to marry Estella (Helena Bonham Carter). Oily Alexander is also well-cast as Herbert Pocket, Pip's effusively cheery London roommate and firm ally. As Pip is plunged headfirst into the demands of his new station, he frequently butts heads with Bentley Drummle (Ben Lloyd-Hughes), a wealthy youth and henchman who has no redeeming

personality traits—and who soon becomes a rival for Estella's attentions.

Bold costume design finds water lilyboyish updated quadricue the familiar tale, the wildly early quiffs and long velvet coats of the trainee gentlemen are more punk rock than staid decorum. Dickensian social satire firmly intact, the slowly浸透 truth through the plots twists and surprising revelations about the shallow ephemerality of worldly wealth and status. Dickens neverore his famously odd ending—and we're left guessing over the lot which version Newell will opt for. LINHUNG KHO

ANTICIPATION: *Kips* chapters are less than great for a fresh take on this oft-adapted Dickens fable.

ENJOYMENT: An adaptation of this quirky, dark romance which zips along at a pace while exuberantly embracing Gothic dramatics.

IN RETROSPECT: If it still loves Tim Burton, but eventually it returns to a fitting spin on a familiar tale.

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3



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The Pool

Directed by CHRIS SMITH
Starring VENKATESH CHAVAN,
AYUSH MOHAN, GANGA CHAVAN
Released NOVEMBER 16



Onally completed in 2007 and released in the US in 2008, *The Pool* from director Chris Smith finally plumps into UK cinemas four years later. Why it's been plucked from the shelf after all this time remains a mystery, though its circuitous release history doesn't take away from the fact that it's an offbeat, charming little film.

You may know co-writer and director Smith for his 1999 documentary, *American Movie*, about a pair of lovable drop-outs attempting to piece together a cult horror movie. *The Pool* couldn't be more of a departure: a Hindi-language Debonair-like comedy-drama about Venkatesh (Venkatesh Chavan), an elusive wayward tow-hold worker who dreams of diving headlong into a swimming pool owned by a rich local family.

A model of lucid, unpretentious and assured character building, Smith's film examines the

harder-to-be-lifetime of life with no financial or family support. He also looks at the psychological strain of developing meaningful aspirations without the correct tools to achieve them. Spied in the branches of a tree growing at the pool, Venkatesh is invited by the owner of the property to help out in the garden, though it's not long before Venkatesh is making eyes at the house's daughter, Aaysha (Ayusha Mohan).

The naturalistic dialogue sparkles as the scruffy-looking young men discuss their ambitions and never stop to having fits of chaste pretense to one another. Venkatesh's tragic backstory and his reasons for wanting to dive into the pool are revealed subtly, while the uses of *iota* (the film's location) through the eyes of an American director in both tasteful and evocative drawing out an emotive, heart-wrenching truth to stay away from the dismal economic conditions

Things go a little nutty during the final big issue, and it's not helped by Smith's baffling decision to fade numerous randomly selected scenes to black. Yet even though *The Pool* is inching towards its EIFF birthday, better late than never we say. DAVID JENKINS

ANTICIPATION: Chris Smith's film has been saved from 2007
£16.99

ENJOYMENT: Much, a bona fide character has in it's favour

IN RETROSPECT: Hopefully Smith will make more movies in this lucid, dark, poetic style

2

3

3

Excision

Directed by RICHARD HUTCHESON JR
Starring ANNALYNNE MCCORD,
TRACI LORDE, ABIGEL WINTER
Released NOVEMBER 2



"I know I can't be a bit of a demented bitch," I sometimes bathe and lone me right?" So 18-year-old Pauline (Annalynne McCord) asks her mother Phyllis (Traci Lords), her words echoing through *Excision* like a desperate cry for help. Innovative, manipulative, delusional and increasingly dangerous, teenager-turned-wombe Pauline is certainly hard to love, but at the same time her intense need to gain her mother's attention and affection is also ultimately what allows viewers to maintain sympathy with her through an escalating series of horrors. That said, McCord's exceptionally nuanced performance goes from erratic to ridiculous to erratic, to downright disturbed, often in the space of a few seconds.

"I don't know if a teenager who doesn't profile as a sociopath?" Pauline says, casually discussing her more aberrant behaviour. Yet while the adults around her regard this gawky, grey-haired high schooler as being like the tree roots

from *Widow to the Doctor*; she is resented both by her distractingly distractible son and surgery (on which we alone are privy) and by her farfetched extra-curricular activities, to be far closer to the unhinged anti-heroine of *Lucky McKee's* 2002 film *May*.

Phyllis is something of a 'demented bitch' herself (a necessary suburban hamlet obsessed with church and religion, overtly boasting less younger, sicker daughter Grace (Abigail Winter) over Pauline). The potentially destructive nature of the mother-daughter bond certainly forms a key theme in Richard Bates Jr's feature debut, expanded from his award-winning 2008 short of the same name.

Yet Phyllis is played by one-time teen porn star Traci Lords, and the film's other adult authoritarians – Pauline's priest, math teacher and headmaster – are played respectively by 'pope of trash' John Waters (*A Cheekwork Orange* bulldog Malcolm McDowell) and Lynchian dad-

from-hell Ray Wise. Bates' clever casting shows that even the most wayward wild child can eventually grow up and become integrated into the society against which he/she once rebelled. It's a ray of hope in a film whose inspiration is otherwise decidedly bleak. ANDREW BATELL

ANTICIPATION:
Good for the buzz

3

ENJOYMENT: A strikingly shot, refreshingly acted adolescent tale of passage from darkly funny to just plain dark

4

IN RETROSPECT: This disturbing, demands great bodies cars no the heart of new growing pains

4

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Lawrence of Arabia

Directed by DAVID LEAN
Starring PETER O'TOOLE, ALEC GUINNESS, OMAR SHARIF
Released NOVEMBER 23

In 1990, following the re-release of the newly restored 1962 cut of *Lawrence of Arabia*, the American Film Institute honoured David Lean with its Lifetime Achievement Award. The award itself was presented by Steven Spielberg who, in his presentation speech, spoke generously of the formative influence of Lean's late-period epic on his own filmmaking career, citing Robert Bolt's screenplay as 'the best ever written'.

Whether we share Spielberg's admiration or simply choose to forgive a hyperbolic attempt at rehabilitating a major filmmaking talent – one who has become more susceptible than most to the uncharitability of critical favour – it's interesting to note that the single line of dialogue upon which this monumental pillar of cinema ultimately hangs is attributable to its director rather than Bolt:

It's Lean himself who, at the last minute, dubbed the part of the sermon on calling out to Lawrence so he finally reaches the Suez Canal following a near-fatal desert crossing. We see the bizarre portmanteau of a ship swelling to cross the desert on the horizon and hear a soldier repeat from afar, "Who are you?" It's the defining question in a film that paints an intimate portrait of psychological tragedy in one of the greatest, most magnificent canvases in the history of cinema.

It's a daunting work of art. From Freddie Young's cinematography to John Box's driving of the range sequence, or Peter O'Toole dancing in the sunlight aboard the cracked train (shot by Andre de Toth and Siegbert's second unit) to Maurice Jarre's score itself. From Lean's single-shot orchestration of the mad on Aqaba to the visual-metanarrative of cinema's most breathtaking 'snail' cut. But of all miracles readily apparent on screen, perhaps the greatest is that the film even got made in the first place.

TE Lawrence was vehemently opposed to the idea of anyone adapting his autobiography *Snows Pillars of Wisdom*, for the screen, tillng writer Robert Graves in 1923: "I hate the notion of being collodized. My rare nata to cinema always deeper as me a sense of their superficial falsity." "Falsity" would have only I like the malady that means everyone man, and the hardness of film seems to me like an excised-and-below-the-belt spontaneous."

Yet the legend of *Lawrence of Arabia* was one born out of cinema, an heroic sagas who grew in public consciousness from literary monographism from the travelling newspaper roundabout and the lectures of Lowell Thomas, one of the few war correspondents with direct access to Lawrence. By the time Sam Spiegel acquired the rights from the estate trustee in 1954, the story of Lawrence of Arabia had already become the stuff of schoolboy legend, cemented through various stage and biographical investigations (even Prince Philip, Alec Guinness, had even played the title role in Terence Rattigan's *As You Like It* in the West End).

Many valiant but frustrated attempts were made by previous rights holders: Alexander Korda to bring Lawrence's story to the screen throughout the 30s and '40s, but myriad factors – poor script, disapproval, to international relations at the outbreak of war – served to thwart them, leaving it to the propaganda machines of the Soviets (the 1938 film *Tarik from Mecca*) and Dr Goebbel's (Opening in December) to mount their own assaults on history.

Lean and Bolt sought to de-mythologise Lawrence to disavow any Robin Hood, cowboys and Indians liaison for something that aped to Shakespearean tragedy happy to play fast and loose with historical veracity if it served their portmanted of a flawed, neurotic genius – a modern crusade. Bolt's Thesis

is no biography; if there's one aspect that prevents Bolt's outstanding screenplay from quite reaching the dizzying pedestal upon which Spielberg places it, it lies in its overstatement of Lawrence's contradictions: the "no one ever knew him" assertion with which the film begins leading towards the answer, "least of all Lawrence himself".

O'Toole's performance never does from Lawrence's preening narcissism and arrogance, even hubris. Yet he effects a remarkable counterbalance both in his compassion and his emotional and strategic intelligence. TE Lawrence himself is highlighted in an early contrast that they should be no women in his screen story, and Lean obliges by keeping his alleged heterosexuality close to the surface. Lawrence's well documented, masochistic tendencies certainly leave the Deseret rape sequence open to performative interpretation.

Whatever TE Lawrence was, Lean film remains an interpretation of unparallelled ambition: its 320-day shoot lasting as long as the Arab Revolt itself. This new 4K restoration of the 220-minute Director's Cut glorifies in a way *Lawrence of Arabia* never has before, a concurrent Blu-ray release serving to make even the most expensive home cinema set-up look like a film made for the cameras, a film, in fact, for which cinema itself was made. **MATT DIBBLE**

ANTICIPATION Four 4K restorations of David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962 epic)

IN BRIEF **REVIEW** Still indomitable

IN BRIEF **REVIEW** Lawrence you will find more beautiful

5

5

5



REVIEWS

Bond 24

As the world comes down with a severe case of Bond fever on the back of the release of *Skyfall*, Adam Lee Davies and David Jenkins ponder what adventures 007 might have next...

DJB: For this new Bond, I think it should start off with a pre-credits sequence of James on a stag do.

ALD: That could actually fly.

DJB: It's like in *The Living Daylights* where you see he's mates with one of the other dealers. Or, so he's on a stag do.

ALD: On the Circle Line. They have to drink a pint of hot cider and Red Bull at every stop. And Pataki should do the soundtrack.

DJB: What is "Pataki"?

ALD: I don't know. He's on MTV a lot.

DJB: So how about the film proper starts at a rock festival on the slopes of MI 6? Bond is there on holiday with all his Promises-Hill chums.

ALD: Is he pretending to be blind like Bond often does? He's bumming along to Coldplay. He's got his aqua-Carding that's mostly foam – but he doesn't mind. He's wearing a River Island Hawaiian shirt.

DJB: Then obviously sent M to drop him down to Neal to get him some calmer wear.

ALD: I'm also picturing him somehow being a quarter-track for the Alfa Romeo and slopping the world from blowing up during the final quarter of the Super Bowl.

DJB: A cross-cultural thing. Yanks love Bond.

ALD: Yeah. He comes on and says, "How do you play the blue jeans?"

DJB: And "Where do you take the free kicks from?"

ALD: It turns out the Deemer Beemers are being run by Big Ed.

DJB: Yes, and Obama is set to present the trophy to the winning team and Bond has to

feel an assassination plot.

ALD: What if the trophy is full of ammonia and they splash it on Obama's face and turn him white?

DJB: And he loves all of his vices. Or what about golf? Bond's gone middle aged, wants to get out of MI6 and decides he wants to get into sport. Golf-finger.



ALD: *The Spy Who Loved Me*. Originally Goldfinger or *Solace*. *Live and Let's Drive*.

DJB: The final scene is set on a driving range and Bond has to hit a ball 500 yards off to a make-or-break match.

ALD: ...on the nose cone of a Zeppelin. Before it crashes into The World Mosque?

DJB: Or the Taj Mahal? Okay, we need to start thinking arm candy?

ALD: Sharon Horgan?

DJB: No.

ALD: Julia Davis?

DJB: No. What about Jessica Ennis?

ALD: No, but what about the unmissable cyclist Victoria Pendleton? She's got lovely hair.

DJB: By the time another Bond film comes out, any mention of the Olympics is going to look well ruff. What about Lady Gaga?

ALD: Yes. The thing about her is, even if they really fancy her, most people have no idea what she looks like. She's just some make-up under an umbrella.

DJB: Lauren Laverne?

ALD: No. What about Emma Watson?

DJB: Yes, she plays a *The Prodigy* whose mother was killed by one of those tennis ball-pushing machines. Ironically.

ALD: Born Elena as Q?

DJB: Which brings us to gadgets.

ALD: It's a tie-up between Apple and Android now.

DJB: What about he has the next generation of iPhone, which doubles as a remote control for a T3? Or one of those indoor helicopters you get from Maplin?

ALD: Talking car?

DJB: Talking book?

ALD: Talking clock?

DJB: But it definitely has to be called Two-Nin-Boobz.

ALD: Sold.

[Tape ends]

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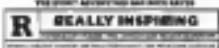
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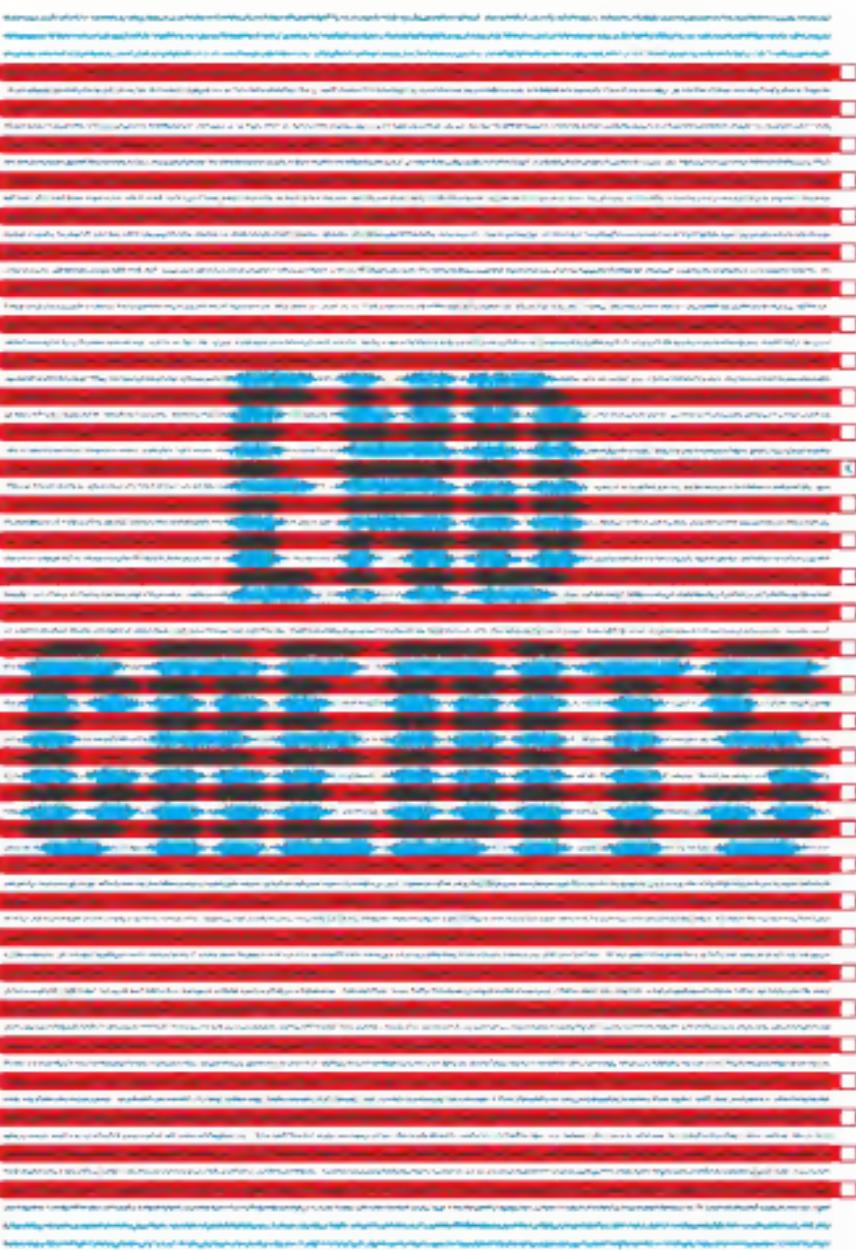


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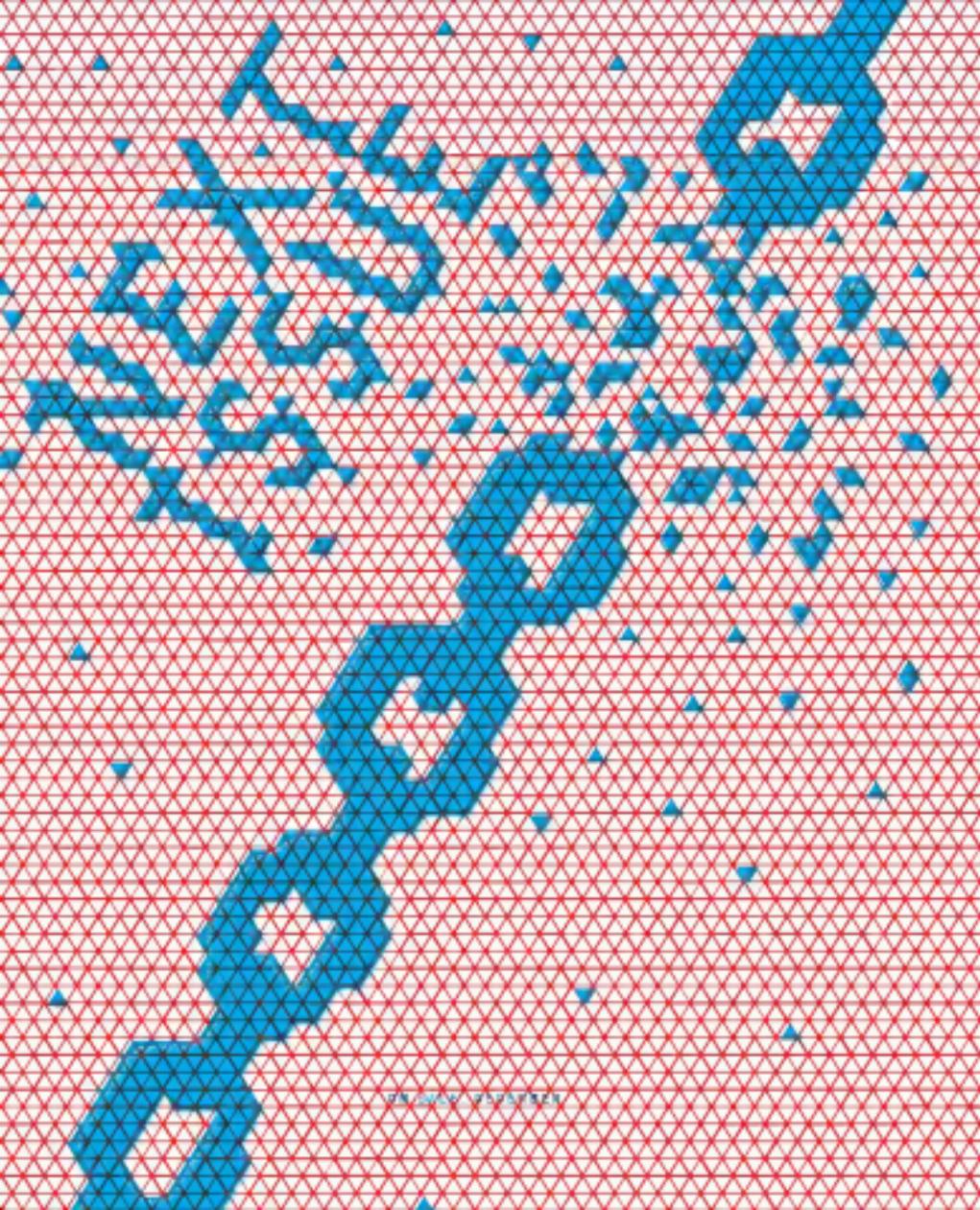
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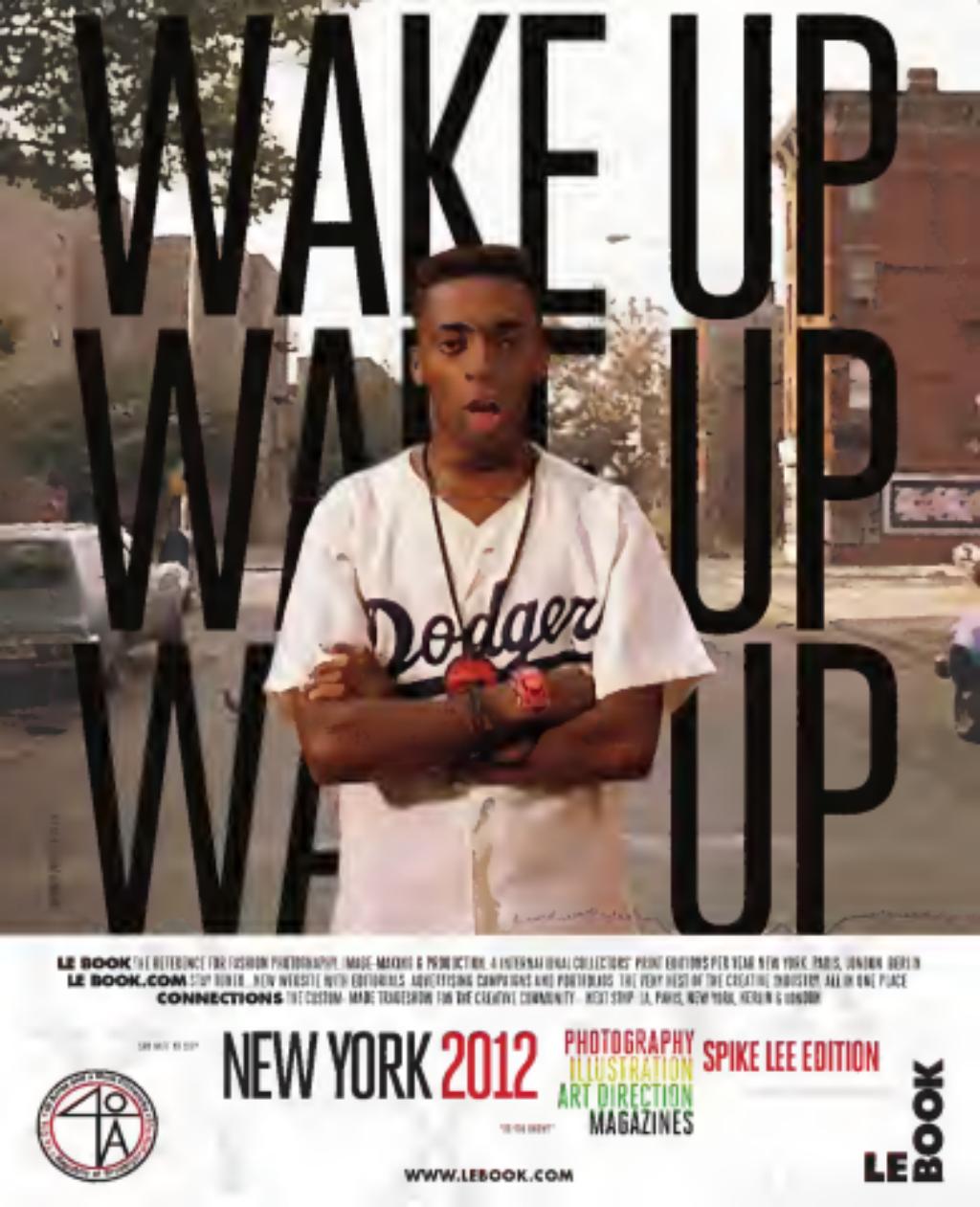
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